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Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The President: This morning the Assembly will first hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, His Majesty King Mswati III, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: I bring with me from the Kingdom of Swaziland the warm greetings and best wishes of Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the whole Swazi nation, to our friends and fellow Member States here at the United Nations.

On behalf of the Kingdom of Swaziland, may I congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are confident that the wisdom, experience and diplomatic skills that you bring to the office will ensure success in the many issues facing this session.

Swaziland would also like to commend the work of your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who presided with such skill over the deliberations of the fifty-first session.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would like to place on record its deep appreciation for the work of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali during his tenure as our Secretary-General. Much was achieved during the five years of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's leadership, and the whole world owes him a huge debt of gratitude.

We would like further to welcome our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has shown in his first year that he has the vision and qualities effectively to lead our Organization into the twenty-first century. All of us in Africa are proud of what he has achieved in such a short time.

One of the main challenges facing our Secretary-General is the reform of the United Nations into a cost-effective, accountable, credible, well-managed and fully representative Organization.

Swaziland gave its full support to the initial Track 1 proposals put forward by the Secretary-General. In particular, we supported the various initiatives designed to reduce administrative costs in favour of increased efficiency in the development programmes in the field. We trust that the welfare of those affected by the necessary cuts has been carefully considered.

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We have also welcomed the Track 2 reforms, announced in July, and again, we support the Secretary-General's proposals on economic and social reform, development cooperation, humanitarian relief and human rights.

We believe that the Secretary-General's address at the first meeting of the general debate struck exactly the right note of wise optimism. The responsibility now lies with the General Assembly to support the Secretary-General's bold approach, and the Kingdom of Swaziland urges its fellow Member States to back the proposals and allow the reforms to forge ahead.

One area of reform that will have a major impact on the openness and accountability of the United Nations decision-making process is the question of the membership and expansion of the Security Council, in particular the need for greater representation of the developing world among the permanent members.

The Kingdom of Swaziland fully supports the updated African Common Position, which calls for, among other things, membership in the Security Council to be based on an equal geographical formula, on a regional or continental basis. This would make the Council more democratic and ensure that all Members would feel fairly and equally represented in our Organization's most influential body.

Africa believes that the continent should have at least two permanent seats, with full voting and veto rights, to represent the views and concerns of the other 51 countries. These two permanent seats would be appointed through the mechanism designed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), following the established traditional practice in force.

At the heart of the debate on overall United Nations reform is the question of finances. Most of the reforms initiated by the Secretary-General are aimed at making the Organization more cost-efficient and accountable and at allowing more of our finances to be available for the programmes in the field. This is a timely and necessary initiative and is deserving of the strongest support of all Member States.

These reforms also justify the recommitment of all Member States to keep up to date with their dues. The Kingdom of Swaziland has consistently tried to maintain a good record in fulfilling its financial obligations to the United Nations. We pledge to do our best to continue to keep up to date, and we would urge all our fellow Member States to show similar confidence in, and support for, our Organization.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would also like to add its voice to the appreciation expressed to Mr. Ted Turner for his extraordinary display of confidence in our Organization. His act of generosity, from the private sector, reflects a new spirit of optimism in the United Nations, and we would call on others with the resources to do so to follow Mr. Turner's example.

Hopes for future global stability have been raised by the various initiatives for reducing the numbers and spread of nuclear weapons and warheads.

The Kingdom of Swaziland in particular commends the commitment of the United States of America and of Russia to the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) programmes, whose implementation will contribute significantly to a more peaceful world for future generations.

We are also encouraged by the global support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and for the Chemical Weapons Convention, both of which have been signed by the Kingdom of Eswatini.

All these initiatives are important indications of the real commitment of almost all countries to promote international peace and security. We fully support the Secretary-General's proposal to create a new Department on Disarmament and Arms Regulation as a necessary addition to the Organization.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to support all moves to bring about a total ban on the production, use and sale of all types of landmines. We participated at the recent Oslo negotiations on anti-personnel landmines and welcomed the signing of the treaty.

We regret, however, that not all countries could be parties to the treaty, while understanding the reasons behind their decisions. We sincerely hope that a way can be found soon to achieve universal agreement on this crucial humanitarian issue.

As a consequence of situations of instability on our borders, we have experienced first hand the terror of landmines, and we have great sympathy for all who have undergone the suffering associated with them. We also watched with great admiration the efforts of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, to bring to the world an

awareness of the horrors of these indiscriminate tools of war. We therefore call on all Member States to support the initiatives aimed at ending for ever the threat of all types of landmines.

The Kingdom of Swaziland views with great concern the situation in the Middle East and in particular the strained relations between the Israeli and Palestinian people. The climate of reconciliation and hope inspired by the Oslo peace accord has given way to suspicion and dread. It is clear that the international community must continue to support the peace initiative as the only way forward and make every effort to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table on a basis of mutual trust and confidence.

The Kingdom of Swaziland supports the efforts of all who are trying to achieve a breakthrough in this area. We call on the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, for the sake of their own people, to find a way out of this apparent deadlock and return to the spirit of compromise which prevailed during the Oslo negotiations, and which held out the promise of lasting peace.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has been encouraged by the recent developments in Northern Ireland, with all-party talks on the future of that troubled province at last under way. We commend the determination of the British and Irish Governments to involve all stakeholders in the negotiations, and we call on all involved to make every effort to ensure that these negotiations lead to lasting peace and stability.

The continent of Africa continues to experience situations of instability and conflict which have unfortunate effects on all of us who call it our home. In the past 12 months we have seen crises in Sierra Leone, the Congo and the Comoros islands, and the continuation of problems in many areas and countries such as the Great Lakes region, the horn of Africa and Angola.The Kingdom of Swaziland prays for the many millions caught up in the violence of these and other situations of instability on our beloved continent, and continues to support efforts to find peaceful solutions.

At the same time, we welcome a number of encouraging events on the continent, in countries such as Liberia, where United Nations efforts towards peace over the years contributed significantly to the elections earlier this year.We applaud the peaceful nature of that process, and we hope and pray that lasting, sustainable peace has at last come to the Liberian people after so many years of conflict.

And we commend the appointment by the Secretary-General of Personal Envoy Mr. James Baker to oversee the situation in Western Sahara. We are most encouraged by developments in this long-running dispute, and we look forward to a lasting resolution in the near future.

In the light of continuing instability on much of our continent, one practical measure undertaken by the whole African community has been the recent initiatives by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and our own Southern African Development Community (SADC), to become better prepared to cope with our continent's crises using the resources available to maintain peace in our region. One element of this has been the training and preparation of African peacekeeping forces for deployment throughout the continent. The Kingdom of Swaziland has pledged its commitment to provide troops for such forces, once adequate training and preparation have been completed.

We should like to record our appreciation to the United States of America for its African Crisis Response Initiative, which is focusing a number of African countries, including the Kingdom of Swaziland, on the requirement for such things as standardized procedures, training and equipment. It is clearly essential for this type of peace force initiative to have the support of the international community and for the OAU to maintain close cooperation with the United Nations in our joint attempts to provide adequate policing of crisis situations in Africa.

For almost 30 years the Kingdom of Swaziland has enjoyed excellent relations with a nation which, despite an outstanding record in international development assistance, and while fulfilling all the requirements for membership of our Organization, is nonetheless excluded from participating in the activities of the United Nations. I am referring to the issue of the Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

In October 1971 the United Nations adopted a resolution which withdrew membership from the Republic of China. That resolution has the effect today of denying the rights of almost 22 million people to be represented here in the United Nations, and to contribute to all the global initiatives undertaken by our Organization.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has been in a position to recognize and experience at first hand the peace-loving nature of the Republic of China on Taiwan and its willingness to help foster peace and prosperity throughout the world. The Government and people of the Republic of China have made enormous advances in economic, social and political terms, and have shown themselves ready and able to share their experience and advice with all the nations of the world.

Many countries and political groupings over the years have also recognized the need to involve the Republic of China on Taiwan in global development activities, through the offices of the United Nations and its agencies. There is also a growing voice of international opinion, including in the European Parliament, the American Congress and among many countries on all five continents, that membership of the United Nations is necessary for the huge resources and wealth of expertise of the Republic of China to be put to the best possible use for the benefit of all mankind.

One of the founding and guiding principles of our Organization has been that of universality, of granting all peoples of the world the right to belong to the United Nations and to be heard in our chambers. It is a reality that almost 22 million people believe that that right is denied to them, by virtue of their country's exclusion from the activities of the one truly global development Organization. The Kingdom of Swaziland therefore proposes to its fellow Member States that the time has now come to review the resolution of 26 years ago. We believe that there is an urgent need to re-examine this issue, taking into account the profound changes in the situation that have occurred since 1971.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has viewed with concern the recent report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which highlighted once more the economic plight of the developing world. Globalization and liberalization are economic principles with which we all agree, but not at the expense of a greater concentration of wealth in the developed countries and an increase in poverty amongst the underdeveloped.

It is all very well to quote the long-term benefits of trade liberalization, but we must understand the severe short-term penalties for those countries which are least prepared to meet them. The Kingdom of Swaziland understands very well what is required of us in a world of free trade, in terms of becoming a producer of finished goods and services in a manner which will allow us to compete effectively and on an equal basis with the rest of the world. But for us to achieve the growth and standards of technology and production required, we and the rest of the developing world need the understanding and support of the developed countries in what will be very difficult economic times ahead.

To meet this economic challenge, the Kingdom of Swaziland is continuing its efforts to develop in a sustainable manner, and to create an environment in which our people can prosper. We have been following up recent national initiatives designed to address our short- and long-term social and political challenges and to enhance the right conditions to allow our private sector to continue to be the engine for growth. We have just completed our latest national development strategy, which will set out Government priorities for the next 25 years. Our own internal restructuring programme is continuing, and Government has begun a series of short-term measures to improve the economy.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a developing nation which is largely dependent on agriculture for its survival. In common with other Member States in our position, we continually find ourselves at the mercy of Mother Nature, and in particular we are dependent on adequate rainfall. Our economy is only just recovering from the devastating drought of 1991 and 1992, and now we have learned with great dismay that the dreaded El Niño is once more present in the Pacific Ocean. If true, this will have the gravest consequences for all of us in southern Africa. The Kingdom of Swaziland has learned the lessons of the last drought, and we have begun a programme of dam construction throughout the rural areas. But the threat of a renewed period of reduced rainfall has come much too soon, and we hope for the support once more of our Organization and our fellow Member States.

In addition to addressing its economic concerns, the Kingdom of Eswatini has also begun a review of the nation's Constitution. In response to the call by the Swazi people for a fundamental and far-reaching review of our existing Constitution, a Commission has been established and is in the process of conducting a constitutional education programme, reaching even to the most remote areas of the country.

This will be followed by a period of submissions from everyone in the Kingdom, after which a constitution, in accordance with the wishes of the whole nation, will be drawn up for national approval.

It will truly be the people's constitution, since the process allows the free participation of all Swazis. National participation in important matters such as these is a crucial guiding principle of the Swazi people and, over the years, has ensured the peace and stability we have always enjoyed.

We have welcomed the encouragement and support for our constitutional review process from the international community, including the United Nations Development Programme office based in the Kingdom. We are confident that, with the involvement of all Swazis, we will produce a document reflecting the wishes of the whole nation, one that will serve us well for generations to come.

There is much vital work to be done in this fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The Kingdom of Eswatini believes that our Organization is at a major crossroads in terms of its own development. We have the opportunity now to carry out the correct reforms and ensure that our Organization is equipped to face the many global challenges that lie ahead in a more efficient, accountable and open manner. We must choose our steps carefully and wisely. Those for whom we are responsible — our people — look to the United Nations to provide the global development leadership that we so desperately need. We cannot afford to fail them.

On behalf of Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the whole Swazi nation, it is my proud duty to reaffirm the commitment of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the Charter and principles of the United Nations. May God watch over the Assembly's deliberations here in the coming months and guide it in its decisions.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Mr. Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

The Honourable Mr. Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Alfred Sant, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sant (Malta): I wish to join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am sure that, with your vast experience and diplomatic skill, this Assembly will be guided towards achieving the goals to which all peace-loving nations aspire. I also take this occasion to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the efficient and energetic manner in which he presided over the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

As we approach the dawn of a new millennium, the international community continues to prepare itself for the new challenges that the twenty-first century will inevitably bring. Malta welcomes the commitment of our evolving United Nations, ably led by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to become more responsive to and effective in meeting these new challenges. Similarly, we share his perception that the United Nations is at a moment of great opportunity.

There should be little doubt that, with the demise of bloc politics, the way has been opened for a world more at ease with itself. Tension on a global scale has diminished. At the same time, global instability has been replaced by regional tensions that have often led to ethnic and other localized conflicts. In our interdependent world, the United Nations has a significant role to play in the promotion of understanding and cooperation, which are essential elements for the survival of humankind.

For its part, Malta is ready to work closely with all Member States to strengthen our capacity for collective action in the best interests of the States and peoples of our countries, particularly in upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Our commitment to fundamental rights and the process of democracy is unwavering.

Malta looks forward to the establishment of an international criminal court in Rome in 1998. Earlier this month, Malta was honoured to host an international conference on this initiative, which we strongly support. Our commitment to the setting up of such a court stems

from the fact that this court would be a landmark development in the creation of a balanced and effective system aimed at ensuring that international crimes, especially mass violations of basic fundamental human rights, do not remain unpunished.

We strongly believe that no country can enjoy peace and prosperity in the true sense of the word unless fundamental human rights are respected and unless the State adopts a democratic system of government. Likewise, Malta is committed to an international policy that promotes disarmament and supports all measures that militate against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Malta fully supports current efforts being undertaken to ban the production and use of anti-personnel landmines.

Eleven months to the day after a democratic change of Government in Malta, I must take this occasion to affirm our commitment to peace, to cooperation among all nations and to the pursuit of economic prosperity in a context of social justice. Placed as it is at the southern rim of Europe and at the geographic and strategic centre of the Mediterranean, Malta stands by its commitment to the ideals of European integration as well as to those of Mediterranean unity. We believe that both these sets of ideals are of vital importance, while being complementary and in the best interests of all Mediterranean and all European peoples.

In following up on these ideals, we have proposed to the Maltese nation a vision of a role for Malta that tangibly affirms the island's neutrality, in order to remove once and for all any perception that Malta could be of any threat to any of its neighbours, north or south, west or east. Within this context, our vision projects for Malta a role that, subject to our clear limitations of size and resources, actively seeks to help build political, economic, social and cultural bridges between all our neighbours and other peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Indeed, Malta's foreign policy has three important constituents. It is a foreign policy based on cooperation with neighbouring countries, free of alignments yet open and friendly to all; supported by an economic strategy based on high-quality production and the provision of high-quality services; and endeavouring to pursue excellence and reliability in all that it seeks and undertakes.

Malta's foreign policy priority is to maintain the best and most transparent relationship possible with all of our neighbours in the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond. Our active neutrality foreign policy agenda aims to deepen our ties with the European Union in a meaningful manner while implementing an active Mediterranean policy to encourage regional cooperation and unity.

Indeed, the Government of Malta aims to forge the closest possible relations with the European Union by negotiating ties in the form of a free trade area coupled with a long-term political and security cooperation agreement, and cooperation in technical, economic, financial and social affairs.

We are equally committed to build upon our Mediterranean identity and heritage by seeking to further spur intra-regional networks of cooperation. Malta strongly believes that such cooperation, based on dialogue and mutual understanding, will contribute to a peaceful Euro-Mediterranean region where Malta is ready to act as a catalyst to bring together the diverse civilizations of the Mediterranean littoral.

It is in this spirit that Malta speaks of and promotes its active neutrality. We seek and promote peace and stability in a troubled and complex region. Malta presents no threat of any nature to anyone. At the same time, Malta extends to all of its neighbours the engagement and commitment of an honest broker, an intermediary or simply a venue for dialogue and discussion, in the search for a solution to the many problems which beset them. The Government of Malta is determined to be proactive in the quest for peace, and, in this context, we are determined to enhance the trust needed to act in the best interests of all of our societies.

Malta's neutrality is indeed validated by our geostrategic position in the centre of the Mediterranean, where political uncertainties, socio-economic disparities and diverse cultural traditions all are contributing to an area that remains plagued by tension and instability. Far from being ideologically motivated, Malta's neutrality is therefore a direct response to the very specific and unique geopolitical factors that currently exist in the surrounding region.

The Government of Malta believes that its strategy of active, site-specific neutrality enables it effectively to promote stability and understanding across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Moreover, this status of neutrality will continue to serve Malta's self-interests precisely because it will also serve the best interests of the European Union member States and of our Mediterranean neighbours.

For Malta, the Mediterranean has been and continues to be an integral element in our national development programme. Malta's active participation in international and regional forums is perhaps best described as an extension of its cooperative security philosophy.

The Mediterranean is a microcosm of today's multipolar world. The region epitomizes many of the problems associated with the North-South debate. These include maritime safety, maritime pollution, illegal migration, terrorism and weapons proliferation. Malta is particularly concerned at the ever-widening demographic gap and the ever-widening economic disparities in the Mediterranean region between the affluent North and the underdeveloped South. Poverty, combined with a lack of job opportunities and deteriorating living conditions, is fueling extremist tensions throughout the Mediterranean.

Malta lies at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and therefore believes it can act as a focal point in the effort needed to attract the necessary attention and resources to tackle security challenges in the region. The Mediterranean is still dominated by areas of tension and conflict, which require our constant vigilance. Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Cyprus question, the situation in the former Yugoslavia, the sanctions against Libya, the situation in Algeria and other issues continue to create political tension, which is unfortunately escalating and therefore creating a sense of urgency in the finding of immediate and enduring solutions.

My Government thus believes that the perceived threats to stability and therefore to security in the Mediterranean are more of a political, environmental, economic, social and humanitarian nature than of a military one.

An important dimension of my Government's foreign policy is directed towards the fight against drug-related matters: illicit trafficking, money laundering and organized crime. As a transit country, Malta could easily be open to involvement in the web woven by drug traffickers. Nevertheless, Malta is more determined than ever to face up to this challenge, which is threatening the very fabric of our societies. Malta calls upon the international community for support in our efforts to eradicate this social plague.

The Government of Malta believes that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Mediterranean, established on the basis of arrangements unanimously agreed to by all the States of the region, would inevitably contribute to peace and stability in the Mediterranean. This fact was acknowledged by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), when the creation of such zones was encouraged.

The ultimate objective of Malta's Mediterranean policy is the transformation of the region into a politically stable and an economically prosperous, demilitarized and nuclear-free zone. In this respect, Malta intends to make maximum use of its contacts and available diplomatic representation at the United Nations and in other international forums to promote its political objective of the Mediterranean Sea as an area of peace and stability. Through regular diplomatic interaction with other Member States at the United Nations, as well as through a more active interchange and collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General, Malta intends to keep questions relating to the Mediterranean high on the international agenda.

Earlier this year Malta was host to the second Euro-Mediterranean Conference, at which 27 States from Europe and the Mediterranean held their second ministerial meeting in as many years to forge a Euro-Mediterranean partnership, an event which in itself has far-reaching significance. The Malta Conference reiterated that the serious and deep-seated problems of our region need to be tackled through a process of dialogue and common action, extending over a period of time and covering a whole range of interrelated issues. It is Malta's conviction that this process has generated a political commitment that will effectively contribute to the removal of the misperceptions and prejudice that still exist in the region.

In its document on foreign policy published before Malta's last general elections, held in October 1996, the Malta Labour Party stated that for the United Nations to improve its credibility and authority, it must improve its structure, its administration and its competence. Above all, it is hoped that this world Organization will develop a more efficient mechanism by which it could implement and execute its decisions more rapidly and effectively.

That is why Malta today supports the initiative of the Secretary-General in presenting his report to the General Assembly and congratulates him for what we consider to be proposals of an unprecedented and comprehensive nature.

This annual gathering provides the perfect setting for the international community to come together and

take stock of the previous 12 months and to identify, as precisely as possible, the challenges that lie ahead. We believe that three types of trans-national security challenges require our immediate attention. These are the war on drugs, environmental degradation and the eradication of poverty. Unlike the immediately visible effects of war, these three challenges cannot always be defined with sufficient clarity, although they have a potential for destruction that is equivalent to that of war. Malta sees each of these areas as a far-reaching hazard which threatens the very fabric of our economic, human and environmental habitat, leading to instability and presenting real threats to our security.

The first challenge concerns the scourge of illicit drug trafficking. Countless human lives are being ruined and wasted to satisfy the greed of a few. This is an unacceptable situation. Malta believes that the United Nations system is well placed to coordinate this fight through appropriate and effective measures. We therefore welcome the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the functions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs be consolidated into a single commission under arrangements that will fully preserve the treaty-based functions entrusted to the latter.

The second challenge we are facing on the threshold of the twenty-first century is the reconciliation of environmental concerns with development needs. The common concerns and mutual interests of the international community in promoting sustainable development, and at the same time protecting our environment, cut across national boundaries.

The problem of the environment is no less relevant to Mediterranean countries. Sound management of Malta's coastal and marine environments is of crucial importance for an island State like Malta. The pressures exerted on the Mediterranean environment as a consequence of its being an important maritime highway and a tourist destination are of particular concern. We believe that solutions to common environmental problems are best found through an integrated regional approach.

My Government is firmly committed to a proactive role in supporting regional initiatives in the Mediterranean for the conservation and sustainable management of its natural marine habitat. Malta has contributed actively to this process in the past, within the context of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Barcelona Convention, the most recent initiative being the setting up of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development. Malta intends to strengthen its participation in that Commission as well as to contribute to the fullest extent to the Mediterranean environmental programmes within the context of the Euro-Mediterranean process.

Malta fully supports the efforts of the Organization in the promotion of environmental protection and the sustainable use of the world's natural resources to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth, and of an international trade regime free of restrictive or discriminatory practices. Together we must adopt an effective course of action for the coming years that will create the right balance between the need for human-centred and socially just development and the need to ensure the sustainability of our natural environment.

In the five years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, not much, unfortunately, has been achieved. Last June's special session made an in-depth appraisal of the progress achieved, defined future priorities and helped to raise the issue of sustainable development higher on the political agenda. We acknowledge that all of us — developed and developing, rich and poor — share a common interest in the pursuit and attainment of development, which must be sustained, equitable and integrated. In the words of the Secretary-General, development is

> "a pillar of peace, a foundation of stability, and a powerful force for preventive diplomacy and preventive action". [*Press release ECOSOC/5708*]

However, our third challenge is what I consider to be the most complex. For years, the international community has been trying to come to grips with the perennial problem faced by millions and millions of the world's population: poverty. The ever-increasing disparities between the haves and the have-nots have reached alarming proportions. The cold war and East-West division have been superseded by a post-cold-war North-South divide. Though many had predicted this development and called for a concerted effort to deal with the issue, little has been done to try to reverse this trend. Poverty still reigns supreme. Aggravated poverty, hunger and malnutrition are a paradox of our times. A fifth of the world's population, or 1.3 billion human beings, live on incomes of below a dollar a day, and over 50 per cent of the world's population have less than 5 per cent of total global income.

The United Nations system is uniquely placed to deal with such intolerable and acute problems. This Organization must dedicate more attention and more time to coordinating effective action to alleviate the suffering and the degrading environment in which billions of citizens still live. It is time to act firmly and unequivocally to halt the aggravation of this situation, which is fast becoming a latent source of political instability in the world.

Malta believes that as we enter the new millennium our Organization must become more relevant; it must become more democratic. Today's setup reflects the past. In a world where everyone is speaking about democracy, the right and the use of the veto become anachronistic. Malta is of the view that the use of the veto should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination. Malta is not in favour of extending the right of veto.

On the issue of the expansion of the Security Council, Malta believes that the Charter of the United Nations considers all States to be equal, and therefore it follows that though we should have a more representative Security Council that reflects today's membership of the United Nations, this can easily be achieved by increasing the number of non-permanent seats to the Council.

My Government has carefully examined the Secretary-General's report on renewing the United Nations, document A/51/950. We agree on the need for more efficiency and greater cost-effectiveness. At the same time, we feel that, as the Organization is a unique body, its tasks and successes cannot be measured solely in monetary terms.

Here, I would like to highlight two important areas of the Secretary-General's report. In paragraph 108 it is stated that when imposing sanctions the Security Council should give more consideration

> "to making these sanctions more effective in achieving the goal of modifying the behaviour of those targeted, while limiting the collateral damages. There is also a need to address the broader humanitarian and economic effects of sanctions, as well as objective criteria in their application and for their termination". [*A/51/950*]

Malta finds itself in total agreement with this statement. While supporting the use of fair sanctions, imposed appropriately and for the minimum period of time possible by the United Nations in its task of guaranteeing international peace, we feel that the decision to impose sanctions, especially those which will ultimately affect the whole population of a given country, must be justified and that they should be imposed only as a last resort.

In another area referred to by the Secretary-General in his report, Malta would like to see the Secretariat's Department of Political Affairs dedicate more time and attention to the situation in the Mediterranean region. In this context, consideration should be given to the establishment of a Mediterranean desk within that Department. The creation of such a desk would facilitate contacts and the Department would thus assume a more direct role in the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Malta's contributions in the search for peace, security and cooperation for the benefit of mankind are well recorded in the annals of the history of this Organization. Malta's initiatives on the law of the sea and climate change and the recent initiative on the new role to be given to the Trusteeship Council are witness to the esteem and dedication which Malta attaches to its role in this Organization.

Malta is a small island State. Notwithstanding this, we look upon the United Nations as the forum where countries such as ours can express their views and where the principle of the equality of States is enshrined and protected. For us, this Organization has much significance and for this reason Malta intends to support the Secretary-General in his quest for urgent reform.

The more efficient and relevant the United Nations becomes, the better our interests are served. My Government will continue to give its wholehearted support to the United Nations, its agencies and its programmes. Many of the problems and challenges which will face us in the third millennium can be overcome only through the concerted efforts of all Member States and through a better, more efficient and more effective United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I call on His Excellency Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. We have no doubt that under your able stewardship this session will successfully address the many and complex issues confronting the Assembly and the Organization.

May I take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, and to say how proud we Malaysians are of the manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Malaysia is honoured by the opportunity given him to serve this Assembly and is deeply grateful for the support he received from Member States, the Secretariat and other members of the international community in the discharge of his duties.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who since assuming office less than nine months ago has swiftly begun to energize and revitalize this Organization through his proposals for change and reform. We wish him every success in these efforts, for which we extend our full cooperation and support.

The general debate of this Assembly is the only truly universal forum where leaders representing diverse sovereign countries and their peoples are able to articulate very freely their views, without fear or favour. Given the monopoly of international information and communication by vested interests, the value of this Assembly as a forum for the free expression of differing views by leaders representing the sovereign Member States cannot be overstated. As an annual debate which serves the purpose of bringing to the attention of the international community the priority issues of concern to sovereign Member States, it cannot be replaced.

Today, I am privileged to have the benefit of this forum to share with Members the priority issues of concern to Malaysia. Let me begin with a matter of immediate concern to us and to a number of other Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, which experienced the severe effects of the turmoil in currency and stock markets in recent weeks. Stock prices plunged while our national currencies depreciated, exacting a heavy toll on economic growth and development. The sequence of events did not take place as a result of war, conflict, natural disaster or mismanagement. It was precipitated by currency speculators - indeed, manipulators - who, driven by sheer greed, took advantage of the vulnerabilities of developing economies, especially the fragility of their nascent financial markets.

What happened in South-East Asia could, of course, occur in other parts of the world which are increasingly dependent on capital flows for economic growth. Such rampant speculation or manipulation of hedge funds in the currency and equity markets of developing countries, at a time when they are still feeling their way in a world of fierce global competition, would trigger off a defensive reflex on the part of the affected countries, thereby arousing anti-liberalization, which would be detrimental to free trade.

In an interdependent world, the currency crisis in South-East Asia warrants the prompt action of the multilateral financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the developed countries, which should assist the affected economies of East Asia in overcoming the effects of this excessive manipulation and in preventing its recurrence. Their positive response in this regard is especially important in order to maintain the developed countries' continued commitment to, and confidence in, globalization, on which so much of international free trade depends.

Threats to the well-being of States take many forms and can come from within as well as from outside. These threats, including the notion of erosion of sovereignty, have been facilitated by the advent of technology. The Secretary-General alluded to this development in his report on the work of this Organization, where he recognized that the same technological means that foster globalization and the transnational expansion of civil society also provide the infrastructure for expanding global networks of "uncivil society" - organized crime, drug-traffickers, money-launderers and terrorists.

We live in a time when it has become fashionable, in some quarters, to distinguish between the security of a State and individual security, especially in the context of developing regions of the world. The perception has been created that the concept of security of the State is somehow inimical to the rights of the individual in the developing world, and this has been highlighted in the context of human rights. The elevation of the importance of human rights in the international agenda, a most welcome development, has been exploited and politicized for narrow self-serving interests and specific political

agendas. If our interest is to heap scorn and to indulge in double standards, selectivity and mutual recrimination, the noble cause of promoting the universal value of human rights is bound to suffer. Blatant violations of human rights — whether in Bosnia and Herzegovina, occupied territories of the Arabs and Palestinians or in other parts of the world — must be condemned and prevented, and not have a blind eye turned to them, if the United Nations is to play an effective role in promoting and protecting these rights.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998, consideration needs to be given to a review of relevant human rights documents and their applications. We must rededicate ourselves to the need for a balanced approach to all aspects of human rights — civil, political, social, economic and cultural. Selective interpretation or application of human rights will not only demean their value but, more seriously, undermine the well-being of individuals in parts of the world that are still engulfed by age-old hatreds and animosities. We should reiterate our recognition of cultural peculiarities, which is an inherent and timeless characteristic of human society. We should assert that there is no intrinsic contradiction between the rights of the individual and those of the community. Individual rights do not exist in a vacuum. Indeed, individual and community rights are not mutually exclusive; they thrive on the basis of a mutually reinforcing and balanced relationship. As one reinforces the other, there should be no artificial separation between the two by stressing the importance of one at the expense of the other.

Malaysia welcomes the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, as the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, and hopes that, together with the United Nations Secretary-General, she will be able to improve the United Nations human rights machinery and role, including the depoliticization of human rights and the timely and full implementation of the right to development.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United Nations remains, as the Secretary-General has put it,

> "the only institution that has the breadth of mandate to address the root causes of instability and conflict and to pursue in a comprehensive and integrated manner the wide array of economic, social and environmental issues impinging on development." *(A/51/950, para. 128)*

We must therefore be wary of those seeking to exploit specific issues designed to marginalize the Organization. More than 50 years after its creation, the pre-eminence of the United Nations in multilateral issues can no longer be taken for granted, despite its universal membership and broad mandates dealing with all issues of peace, security, disarmament and development.

The commitment of the United Nations to development remains its most significant role. While the Organization's forays into peacekeeping make all the headlines, it is its work in development, in terms of resources generated and the changes made in peoples' lives, that is most vital and meaningful to Member States. It has become clear that while the eradication of poverty and the enhancement of development are the responsibilities of individual States, the United Nations system has a key conceptual and promotional role to play.

The ultimate objective — to secure the development of developing countries — remains the same. We need to constantly re-examine the means by which to attain this goal. The United Nations must strongly project the need for higher levels of growth, accelerated development, and equitable geographical distribution of growth. In this context, we need to ensure that our approach to development takes into account the economic, political and technological realities of our time, especially the increasing influence of the private sector.

Regrettably, resources made available for development have declined substantially in recent years, adversely affecting the various United Nations programmes and agencies concerned. Culpability must rest with those who had promised to assist but failed to deliver. In the light of such a disappointing let-down, the United Nations should explore the possibilities for closer cooperation with other stakeholders, particularly the corporate sectors.

With their vast resources, expertise, financial clout and extensive global networking, those in the private sector should be welcomed as partners to operationalize certain aspects of sustainable development. They could, for example, provide assistance on environmentally sound technologies where Governments have left a void. The United Nations should ensure that it involves the private sector from all over the world. However, it must also

ensure that it will not be dominated by the interests of the business community, by holding the corporate actors accountable.

The United Nations must continue to be a democratic institution, accountable to all its Members. Unfortunately, this cornerstone of the Organization continues to be assailed by those still bent on the quest for geopolitical dominance. In an increasingly unipolar world it is imperative that the United Nations preserve its independence or autonomy and decide in the interests of all Member States, not just those of a particular Member State or group of States.

The process of the democratization of the United Nations is particularly important in the context of the reform of the Organization, especially that of the Security Council, which is long overdue. Malaysia supports an early resolution of the issue. Ambassador Razali Ismail, in his capacity as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and as Chairman of the high-level working group on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, tried his best to move the process forward.

Concerted efforts must continue to be made to ensure that, since the Council's permanent members cannot be abolished, its continued existence must reflect current realities, in particular the significant role of the developing countries in international affairs. At the same time, as a matter of principle, there should be no discrimination or differentiation between the old and the new permanent members. If reform of the Council is to be truly comprehensive and consistent with the spirit and realities of our time, then we must seek to remove — or at least, as a first step, restrict — the use of the veto power. Democracy in the United Nations is a mockery if the voice of the majority is rendered meaningless by the narrow interests of a dominant few.

Malaysia believes that genuine global peace and security and the survival of mankind can only be assured in a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, remains a foremost priority of the global community, and we urge the Secretary-General to reaffirm his support — notwithstanding his preoccupation with certain aspects of proliferation issues, particularly small arms.

We are deeply concerned over the trend in some quarters to ignore the need to stop vertical proliferation. We urge the international community to expedite efforts to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, to be formalized in a nuclear weapons convention. We hope that the new and reconstituted Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation will place as high a priority on disarmament as it does on proliferation of weapons and arms regulation. For its part, like a number of other regional groups, has positively contributed to the disarmament process by bringing into force the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which still awaits the support of the nuclear-weapon States.

While we stress the importance of non-proliferation, real progress in disarmament will only be achieved by addressing the issue in all its aspects. While nations that aspire to become nuclear Powers should disavow their intentions, the declared nuclear Powers, which are also the world's largest arms traders, should also embark on the road towards general and complete disarmament. In this regard, we laud the global initiative to ban landmines, and call on the producers of these mines to help defray demining and rehabilitation costs in the affected countries.

International peace and security continues to be threatened by the deteriorating situation in the Middle East following the waning of the peace initiative in the Middle East. Mutual distrust has replaced the synergy for peace as the *modus operandi* between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Malaysia supports the call for the immediate resumption of peace talks and affirms its support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination.

We urge the international community to persuade or pressure Israel to honour its part of the Oslo accords by lifting the ban on Palestinian cities and towns, and to give up its intention to build settlements in what are occupied territories. We are further alarmed by Israel's decision to build a dam in the occupied Golan Heights. We view this as a deliberate act of provocation and bad faith, and question its sincerity in seeking genuine and enduring peace with its Arab neighbours.

In the meantime, the international community should continue to provide the necessary financial support to ameliorate the plight of the Palestinians — for example, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to which my Government has made its modest contribution over the years, in addition to our own bilateral assistance to Palestine. It is important that UNWRA be provided with

adequate resources to fully implement its programmes and activities.

We remain seriously concerned over the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Obstacles continue to impede the full implementation of the Dayton peace accord. Further, mutual mistrust and animosity among the different ethnic groups cast doubts over the future of the country. It is our fear that the withdrawal of the international forces from that country could trigger a new wave of violence and bloodshed. This fear is real, particularly since indicted war criminals, who should have been removed from the scene long ago, are still at large and exercising power and influence.

Malaysia believes that creating an environment of trust and understanding among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a priority. The international community should make efforts to promote goodwill among the Bosnians and encourage them to live in peace and harmony. One such initiative could take the form of informal round-table conferences, participated in by Bosnians of all ethnic origins, representing the different sectors of society and professions, including academia, and participants from other countries, to discuss all issues of ethnic relations with the view to enhancing understanding and cooperation among them.

It is my hope that from this effort will emerge a sizeable group of leaders from various professions, acting as catalysts for the promotion of goodwill and cooperation among the ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Malaysia is prepared to work with like-minded countries to help realize this idea. We have to ensure that peace and stability endure in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that we contribute in the efforts towards its early reconstruction. At the same time, we must all work to bring justice back to the Balkan region by ensuring that just retribution is meted out to those who participated in some of the worst atrocities of this century.

As we approach the twenty-first century, our energies and preoccupation must centre on building and strengthening peace and prosperity. Peace and security are two sides of the same coin: peace nurtures prosperity, while prosperity reinforces peace. Peace at the national level is sustained through democracy, good governance and close collaboration between the different segments of society.

Malaysia, a multiracial and multi-religious society, which less than a month ago observed its fortieth anniversary, has been blessed with peace and prosperity. While this may partly be due to fortuitous circumstances, a lot of it has to do with an effective leadership and a people determined to improve their lot. It is fortunate that we have been able to rule the country by the process of the ballot and not the bullet, with regular free and fair elections and with the different races accommodating and sharing power on the basis of democratic principles.

By engendering social and racial harmony based on a political compact, we have been spared many of the traumas experienced by less fortunate countries and we were thus able to achieve our development goals in relative peace and tranquillity. I am happy to say that we have been able to share some of our experience in nation-building with a number of our friends in the developing world.

In spite of the many criticisms levelled at the United Nations — some of them not entirely justified — this much maligned Organization of ours has remained steadfast in its mission to serve the international community, even as its resources have been dwindling in recent years. Clearly, in an ever-changing world that is growing more complex and increasingly unipolar, the United Nations has served as a pillar of international order. Serving as the collective conscience of humanity and the arbiter of its conflicts, the Organization, despite its deficiencies, has functioned as an indispensable norm-making and institution-creating instrument of international relations.

In my view the process of United Nations bashing has gone on far too long. While the introspection that followed was inevitable and has had a sobering effect on the Organization, it is time for us to pick up the pieces and allow the Organization to get on with its mission. For this purpose, the Secretary-General has put forward a comprehensive package of reform proposals for which he must be given a lot of credit. Obviously, such a wide-ranging package by its very nature cannot please every one of the 185 Members of the Organization. The Secretary-General has attempted to put together proposals and strategies that are intended to secure the broadest support from Member States predicated on a slate of shared common goals.

Malaysia is supportive of the general thrusts of the Secretary-General's package of reform proposals. Many of the highlights of these proposals are indeed interesting and deserve our serious consideration. We support the Cabinet-style management approach that the Secretary-

General is introducing, revolving around the Senior Management Group, as well as his proposal to create the post of Deputy Secretary-General. We hope that the Deputy Secretary-General will not only assist an already overburdened Secretary-General in the management of the Secretariat, but would also have substantive responsibility in overseeing the core area of development which is dear to the hearts of developing countries.

Malaysia also welcomes the measures being taken to increase and improve coordination between United Nations Headquarters and its field operations. We also support the rationalization of the work of the Organization involving the reconstitution or amalgamation of the various departments aimed at consolidating and integrating their work so as to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. We trust that in carrying out the reorganization exercise, the Secretary-General will be guided by the need to ensure that the changes will benefit all of the Member States, particularly those in the developing world.

My delegation will take an active part in the detailed discussion of the Secretary-General's reform proposals in any format that will be agreed upon by Member States which will facilitate their implementation at an early date. In carrying out these reforms, however, we should not lose sight of the importance of the financial health of the Organization, which has been highlighted by the Secretary-General himself. The proposed revolving credit fund is a welcome measure insofar as it provides financial solvency in the short term. But it is unfair and unethical that the rest of the world is held to ransom by the few who disregard international treaties and agreements and Charter provisions for the sake of their narrow national interests. We join the Secretary-General in urging Member States to work towards the speedy resolution of the financial crisis of the United Nations by fulfilling their financial obligations towards the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dariusz Rosati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Rosati (Poland): At the outset I would like to offer my sincere congratulations upon Mr. Udovenko's election to the honourable post of President of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Polish delegation expresses its satisfaction that the presidency of this session has been entrusted to an eminent statesman from Ukraine, a country with which we have ties of friendship and cooperation based on common values and aspirations. The President may count on my delegation's full cooperation in the performance of his important tasks.

Please also allow me to extend expressions of appreciation and respect to Mr. Razali Ismail, a prominent representative of Malaysia, for his excellent guidance of the work of the General Assembly during its fifty-first session. I would also like to address words of the deepest respect to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for the outstanding manner in which he has demonstrated his qualities of leadership and good judgement.

Seven years since the downfall of a polarized world and less than three years away from the year 2000, we are already living in a new era. Are we, the citizens of the Earth, aware of the momentous changes and the new responsibilities which they entail? When looking at ourselves from the perspective of the Pathfinder on Mars, or of the space station Mir, do we see humanity in its entirety or, rather, spasmodic movements of an anthill, always prepared to fight over every scrap, devoid of the gift of synthesis and without ability to perceive the whole?

These are the questions which all of us, especially here in this Hall, are confronted with. The burden of responsibility of the United Nations for resisting dangers and facing challenges, for eliminating tensions and constantly building foundations for the future, has not been relieved. It has not diminished. Perhaps it weighs even heavier today than ever before.

From that moment in 1945, in San Francisco, when Arthur Rubinstein, an outstanding piano virtuoso and a great Polish patriot, proudly inaugurated the United Nations era with the notes of the Polish national anthem, until today, our Organization has given the impression of being oriented towards emergency actions rather than systematic and comprehensive work programmes. The General Assembly and the Security Council are excessively preoccupied with current issues. Nonetheless, torn apart by the global confrontation between the free world and totalitarianism, they attempted to find mechanisms of dialogue and negotiation that would protect the world from global conflict. They have fulfilled that role. No one, neither the fiercest opponents of the idea of the United Nations nor the greatest promoters of its radical modernization, can deny the United Nations achievements in maintaining world peace and security and resolving local conflicts. One has to bow to the visionary skills and political genius of the creators

of the Atlantic Charter, which provided the foundation for our Organization. Their work has stood the test of time in circumstances unforeseeable when the system was established.

Until now we have been concentrating on avoiding war. Shocked by the tragedy of the Second World War and the experience of ravages of previous wars, we have put all our energy into the creed "Never again". However, concentrating on avoiding war, the United Nations has not always been able to pay sufficient attention to building a world for people, a world of harmonious existence and balanced development. I should like to emphasize this point again and again.

The time has come to pay more attention to building a world for all people, of all races, all religions and all cultures, for people in the wealthier North and the poorer South.

An important area of international cooperation has been the effort to eliminate weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical and biological. This Organization has made a significant contribution to this activity. Among the recent milestones in this domain, I should mention the enactment of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, as well as the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We also consider extremely important the ongoing work towards wider application and universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the basis for a global regime of nuclear-arms non-proliferation.

We attach particular significance to the willingness of the United States and the Russian Federation, as confirmed at the Helsinki summit this year, to continue the START negotiations, taking them to a qualitatively new stage involving the radical reduction of nuclear arsenals. We trust that the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation, upon which these negotiations are conditioned, will soon be a fact, just as we hope that our expectations with regard to the immediate ratification by Russia of the Chemical Weapons Convention will become a reality in the near future. We welcome President Clinton's decision to submit to the Senate for ratification the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as he announced from this rostrum.

Both for humanitarian reasons and for reasons of our country's security interests, we attach great importance to effective actions aimed at limiting or banning conventional weapons, including anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the momentous arrangements concerning this issue that were agreed at the recent Oslo Diplomatic Conference. We believe, however, that the consolidation and universalization of these agreements should continue to be sought persistently at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. This would guarantee participation in the negotiations of the main manufacturers and exporters, which in turn would serve to take better into account the legitimate security interests of all countries.

In this context of conventional disarmament, allow me to confess that it was with immense sadness that my delegation — just like everyone else in the world — received the news of the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, a great supporter of a ban on landmines.

We are currently starting a new and different stage in the history of the United Nations. The moment has come to pose truly fundamental questions about the future and to provide answers. Global peace is a primary value, but should we not reach beyond that? In our view, global peace is a fundamental precondition to the preservation of human dignity and the observance of human rights, to the enhancement of economic and political justice and to harmonious and sustainable development. But the time has come for the United Nations to open up more so as to meet other challenges of contemporary civilization.

United Nations agencies have already made progress in this direction. The experience they have accumulated, as well as their lasting achievements in the definite improvement of living conditions for millions of people, constitute an important starting point. In this respect, sufficient funding aimed at specific programmes is the prerequisite for success. We welcome donations and philanthropy, which are an important source of additional funding and a clear sign of public support. However, the United Nations needs a solid foundation for its activities, and regular contributions by all Members are indispensable.

The reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his report, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", provide the basis for fundamental changes in the activities of our Organization that will allow it to serve better the needs and expectations of all the Member nations facing the challenges of the twenty-first century. It is with hope and optimism that we welcome the initiatives of the Secretary-General. We believe they will lead to improved effectiveness and better management of the United Nations system. They increase the focus on

development programmes and enhance the credibility of the Organization. They strengthen the relationship between Member States and the United Nations. Poland supports the proposed direction of the United Nations reforms. We are prepared to cooperate actively in this process, and we are vitally interested in further efforts to reinvigorate the United Nations system, including its economic and social sectors.

There is no immediate threat of a global conflict, but local conflicts might often lead to conflicts on a much greater scale. The world was not free of regional or even internal conflicts before, but either their importance and ramifications seemed less significant in the face of a threat of worldwide conflict, or they were temporarily frozen by the cold war. With the ice melting, local conflicts ignited with renewed intensity. The international community, fully aware of the threat they presented, made efforts to assist in defusing them, with varying degree of success. Understandably, the United Nations had a perception of its responsibility and took action using the means at the disposal of the Security Council. Poland supports all the efforts to institute the concept of rapid deployment in order to improve the capability of the United Nations to respond quickly to crisis situations. Our experience proves that the ability to address local conflicts should be one of the priorities in our efforts to reform the Security Council.

The basic premise for balanced enlargement and reform of the Council should be the increased effectiveness of its work in an international environment which is undergoing fundamental changes. With our experience of nearly two years of participation in the Security Council, we are inclined to conclude that the effectiveness of Security Council activities is greatly enhanced when it enjoys the full support of the respective regions represented in the United Nations. Therefore, we support the aspirations of various regional groups to additional seats in the Council if its membership is expanded. At the same time, Poland would find it necessary to increase the representation of Central and Eastern Europe in the Council by an additional member. Thus, my Government is in favour of the accession of Japan and Germany to permanent seats.

Poland is among the countries convinced of the necessity of reforming the Council to adapt it to current and future tasks. While implementing these reforms, we should take into consideration two parallel and sometimes conflicting tendencies: globalization and regionalization. The emerging concept of regional responsibility should undergo consolidation. Its burden is being carried by regional organizations engaged in resolving regional conflicts, prominent cases in point being the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as those of the Organization of African Unity.

We believe that regional organizations should be more engaged in preventive diplomacy and maintaining peace while ensuring full compatibility with the United Nations Charter. Thus, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is contributing to the fulfillment of the basic task of the United Nations — maintaining international peace and security — through active regional cooperation in both conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as in post-conflict rehabilitation.

When Poland assumes the duties of OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 1998, it will make every effort to maintain and develop further a high standard of cooperation between that Organization and the United Nations.

In an atmosphere of global peace there is a much better chance to stand up to conflicts as old as humanity, such as religious conflicts, those between rich and poor and those between various ethnic groups.

The Polish people, with its historical experience of times of freedom and times of bondage, is gaining new experience today. As the pioneer of the 1990s breakthrough, which led to the end of a polarized world, today Poland is experiencing both joy and hardship: the joy of returning to the family of free nations and the hardship of a transformation period and the restructuring of our economy.

This year Poland has been undergoing a bitter test, fighting against a natural disaster unparalleled in centuries: the catastrophic flood in the south and west of the country. May I take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to the countries, organizations and persons of goodwill that have come to our assistance. If there is any lesson to be drawn from this horrible experience, it is that massive natural disasters are a kind of danger that we all have to learn to withstand together.

This year's flood, whose destructive force struck our country, also had a disastrous effect on our neighbors, in particular the Czech Republic and Germany. We found that such disasters can be faced much more effectively if the preventive and rescue

operations are organized on an international and, especially, a transboundary scale.

There is an old saying that a friend in need is a friend indeed. But one can also find friends in moments of success and moments of joy. Thanks to the help of our friends, and to their satisfaction, Poland crossed two great thresholds this year. It was invited to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and to the European Union. Negotiations with NATO are already under way, and those with the European Union will commence at the beginning of next year. Our readiness to shoulder responsibility and our ability to meet the requirements have been recognized. Poland is now considered a reliable and respected member of the community of democratic nations.

The outcome of our recently held parliamentary elections has confirmed that this basic orientation of our foreign policy will remain unchanged and is supported by the overwhelming majority of the Polish people.

The world is still imperfect. Millions of people are paying — with their freedom, their dignity and sometimes even their lives — the price of lack of democracy and lack of respect for human rights. There are forces that feed on ethnic antagonisms. Poverty is the fate of millions of people across vast territories. But other problems on a global scale are also visible — climate changes and diverse environmental concerns, the constantly widening gap between rich and poor and the insufficient reach of education and health care. The reforms which we undertake should increase the United Nations capability to address these important issues. Let me now elaborate on some of them.

Through deep and carefully thought-out reform, we should equip the United Nations with mechanisms capable of ensuring respect for the human rights of all the world's citizens to a greater degree than before. The United Nations evolution and reform introduce the human rights issue in quite a natural way to the Security Council agenda. We welcome this trend. There is a clear connection between international security and respect for human rights, which should be reflected in the activities of the Security Council. The events of the past few years in Africa have again dramatically confirmed the existence of such a relationship.

1998 will be a special year for human rights. Half a century ago the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a catalogue of the individual's rights and duties. However, the concept of human rights still varies from region to region. I think that on the threshold of the twenty-first century, as we emphasized in Warsaw this January when inaugurating the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is worth considering how to use this variety to build a universal concept of human rights, just as the Declaration initially assumed. At the same time, however, we oppose any attempt at the so-called revision of the Universal Declaration, which must remain a common minimal standard for all humanity.

As a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights starting on 1 January 1998, Poland confirms its willingness to continue the dialogue and cooperation with representatives of all regional groups. Observance and promotion of human rights are for all of us a great challenge at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

We also believe that closer economic cooperation with developing countries will help them overcome difficulties and actively participate in the world economy. Poland is undertaking and will continue to undertake important projects in this field. We also want to point out the important role of international institutions in providing development assistance for partners with lower levels of income. We will continue to give them our support as their tasks require and our capacity allows.

A year ago, in this General Assembly Hall, the President of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, formulated a proposal for the elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime. We were encouraged by the massive support that the Polish initiative received from the membership of this Organization. We think that the international community should take active measures to stop the spreading cancer of transnational crime. We must secure the effective cooperation of countries and organizations concerned.

We believe that the United Nations will find for itself a creative and constructive role through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which has been entrusted with the task of elaborating this convention. Poland is ready to cooperate with other countries to extend the scope and range of the convention if such extension would meet the needs and expectations of Member States. We appreciate the work of the Commission on this subject and hope that the Assembly will receive a final draft of the convention at its next session.

Equally important are the environmental issues. The most important among them are those related to climate changes. To deal effectively with such problems as the greenhouse effect, melting of glaciers and the protection of tropical forests is a task far exceeding the ability of any single country or even region. It is hard to imagine effective action in this area unless we all join forces.

It is justifiable to reconsider whether the United Nations is an organization capable of dealing with these tasks. The doubts voiced by the skeptics should not be ignored. However, Poland is among the countries that believe that the United Nations system can, through the collective effort of its Members, meet the challenges. This effort has to be directed towards, among other things, understanding current and future dilemmas which reach beyond this century. It must be sustained with a vision, shared by all Members of the system, of the shape they wish to give to tomorrow. It must involve the will to develop an organizational system and make it effective, with each Member bearing its share of responsibility. Today's Poland — democratic, economically successful, enjoying good relations with all its neighbours, binding itself to alliances with the European Union and NATO — is ready to participate in carrying out this task.

We must rise to the expectations of the United Nations. As one of the Organization's founding Members, Poland will not cease in its support of the United Nations as a global forum for resolving problems and conflicts, and especially for ensuring a just and effective system of global governance aimed at eliminating threats to humanity. Poland stands ready to do its part for the purpose of achieving these lofty goals.

Address by Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Fatos Nano, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Nano (Albania): Let me first join all the distinguished personalities who have spoken before me from this rostrum in congratulating Mr. Udovenko on his election as President of the General Assembly for the current session and wishing him all possible success in this lofty post. I would also like to convey my high appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the excellent leadership he provided during his tenure of the previous General Assembly presidency.

May I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to the highest post of our global Organization. We are confident that his long experience as an international civil servant and his correct assessment and proper action in implementing the United Nations reform are guarantees of the successful crowning of our efforts to have a stronger and more efficient Organization.

Before I deal with the more general questions concerning our common work and efforts in the Organization, I would like to dwell briefly on the dramatic events and developments that occurred in my country, in particular during the first half of the current year, which were also of concern to the United Nations.

The Assembly is already aware of what happened in my country, during which total chaos and anarchy reigned for months. That was perhaps the biggest crisis in our modern history. Albania has a peculiar history of chronic isolation, of almost total estrangement from the rest of the world, of great potential, human and natural wealth, while being, at the same time, underdeveloped and poor. Our difficulties of growth are directly linked to the legacies of former rules and half a century of communism, of non-existent, non-functioning or malfunctioning democratic institutions, both during and after the collapse of communism and its structures, as well as with our mentality. They are linked to flaws and shortcomings in different fields, to clear tendencies to forsake freedom, to partisan intolerance, to lack of inter-party constructive cooperation, to mismanagement and corruption, to autocratic behaviour and decisions — not rare phenomena in our part of the world.

It was the great complexity of these and other developments, coupled with the collapse of the get-rich-quick pyramid investment schemes, which led to broad popular frustration, disillusionment and general unrest and brought the whole country to the state of unprecedented chaos and anarchy I mentioned a moment ago.

In these circumstances, the international community reacted promptly, displaying a remarkable sense of responsibility, unity and solidarity amongst its members and with my people and country, one of the Members of this Organization. The involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union, the United Nations Security Council's benediction, and the well-balanced, all-out efforts and contribution of important neighbours and friends helped us to prevent further aggravation and to alleviate and gradually overcome the crisis.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend in the warmest possible terms the very serious commitment of the OSCE; its Chairman-in-Office, Minister Petersen, and his Personal Representative, former Austrian Chancellor, Mr. Vranitzky; the United Nations and its Security Council for their prompt response to this emergency situation through their relevant decisions, resolutions and concrete actions. Let me also thank most warmly all the troop-contributing States — France, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Romania, Denmark, Portugal, Austria, Belgium and Slovenia — which, under the excellent leadership and command of Italy, made the entire effort of the Multinational Protection Force a full success in the implementation of its mandate. Last but not least, I would wish to express my deep appreciation and thanks to the European Union and all the other international and regional organizations, the United States of America, as well as to other individual States, for the continuous support and assistance they have given and are giving my country. My people are indebted to them and to all here.

This highly appreciated assistance helped us start a process of reconciliation and gradual restoration of political stability in the country. It is also a reflection of historical lessons learned in today's efforts to establish a peaceful, democratic and united Europe, without walls and fully free, in which the integration processes should be comprehensive enough not to exclude any country, even the weakest, as Pope John Paul II said. This is the only road to ensuring that the universal principles which this global Organization and others stand for are permanently upheld and defended.

The successful holding of elections in Albania on 29 June, which were considered by the international community as adequate and acceptable, can and must be the foundation for a stable democratic system. They showed the strong desire of my people for a democratic future for Albania. The coalition Government which emerged from these elections is fully determined to work with a new philosophy based on cooperation and coexistence, on sharing and, at the same time, assuming responsibilities, by the majority and the minority alike. The guiding yardstick will be making maximum use of internal capacities as the best way to ensure continuation of the spirit of understanding, the process of reconciliation, constructive cooperation, economic recovery and the overall return of normalcy to the country in the shortest possible time. This is the spirit we have decided to be guided by, as personified brilliantly by the Albanian famous worldwide, Mother Teresa.

We do hope and will work to ensure that this process will bring about the necessary transformation of the country into a reliable partner that truly shares common democratic values and qualifies for its gradual but sure integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures it has the objective to achieve.

Let me inform the Assembly that our main, urgent challenge remains the restoration of public order and security in the country. Therefore, we have devoted maximum and special attention to it. Lack of public order and security cannot coexist with the development of the economy and democratic values. Intensive work is already under way on the basis of short- and long-term plans.

Special emphasis is being put on and we have started work towards the reorganization of the army, with the objective of gradually having a smaller, more efficient and professional force under strict civilian control, in conformity with all standards of modern armies, capable of performing its functions properly and of being a genuine partner in partnership activities. Various problems persist in the economic field, where we have witnessed a quasi-paralysis of life and the deterioration of all micro- and macroeconomic indices. In cooperation with and the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, we hope we will be able to deal successfully with the main economic and social priorities. We have already started work in this direction, for both the emergency situation and the mid-long-term perspective.

Albania is determined to go ahead with the democratization processes in general — the rebuilding, establishment and proper functioning of democratic institutions to ensure the true entrenchment of the rule of law in all its dimensions.

All of these issues were discussed in Rome at the preparatory meeting for the upcoming ministerial meeting

to be held in that city and the donors conference set to take place in Brussels next month. We are prepared for these meetings to begin the implementation of what we have achieved and will agree upon, in close cooperation with the relevant organizations.

On behalf of my Government, I should like to pay tribute to all of the international organizations and financial institutions, from the United Nations and its specialized agencies to the European and Euro-Atlantic bodies as well as individual countries, which have since the beginning of this process shown unstinting interest and commitment in working in their respective areas of responsibility.

The main objective of my Government's foreign policy is directly to contribute to the enhancement of peace, security and stability in our region and in Europe through a gradual integration into all relevant Euro-Atlantic structures.

Albania's past, present and future are closely linked, in a variety of ways, with those of our neighbours. Like all neighbours, we share not only common borders but also, we hope, common interests and values and a common future. This requires our full participation in the European integration processes, in a common Europe united by these values and not characterized by friction and confrontation.

Relations with neighbouring countries and peace and stability in the region are of paramount importance for us. We will continue to work constructively and openly to solve all the pending problems that involve vital national interests for Albania and represent a major concern for the international community. One such question is that of Kosovo. Inter-linked issues — good relations with neighbouring countries, peace and stability in the region, and the situation in Kosovo and its just solution — should be pursued in a complementary manner, with none of them opposing, undercutting or jeopardizing the others.

I should like to say a few words about the situation in Kosovo and how we see its future, because unless this question is dealt with properly and settled accordingly, this serious issue could continue to threaten peace and regional stability. Kosovo has been on the agenda of the international community, and in particular of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union, for years now. Unfortunately, the situation there remains the same, and we are not sure how long the status quo can be maintained. Police violence and brutality, massive repression and gross violations of human, political and national rights — which we strongly condemn — continue unabated in Kosovo. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has given no real, concrete sign of changing its attitude, despite three General Assembly resolutions, one Security Council resolution and scores of OSCE decisions and statements.

We appeal to this global Organization, to European organizations and structures, to those who made a major contribution to ending the war in Bosnia through the Dayton accords and to all those who have the power and the political will to continue to exert the necessary pressure to direct this major pending issue in the Balkans onto the path of negotiation, with proper international mediation, with a view to a just, peaceful and democratic solution acceptable to all. Perhaps a mini Dayton-type conference aimed at solving all the remaining problems of the former Yugoslavia, including and focusing on the Kosovo issue, might do the job by Europeanizing our region, a process that would have to start with a full-scale reactivation of Balkan cooperation.

The General Assembly will hopefully be able to send another message to all those concerned, in particular the people of Kosovo, that the international community continues to be deeply concerned and seized of the matter, that it supports and encourages peaceful approaches, and that it wants to see positive changes in the right direction.

My country fully supports all the efforts under way to ensure the full and unequivocal implementation of all the Dayton accords. It considers attempts to circumvent or avoid certain Dayton provisions as dangerous, with implications that could go beyond its scope. We maintain that there is no alternative to the full implementation of Dayton.

The Albanian Government is strongly committed to promoting and actively taking part in regional cooperation, knowing that democratization, market economy prosperity, good-neighbourly relations and constructive cooperation are prerequisites for the secure environment and prosperity that our region deserves, as well as for the realization of our country's aspirations to a gradual but full European integration. Our vision for our region's future is a Schengen-type approach. We believe that regional initiatives such as the Conference on European Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and initiatives of the Commonwealth of Independent

States, *inter alia*, are worthy steps that are also contributing to this end.

Albania is highly appreciative of the efforts, the assistance and the contribution of the Organization with respect to conflict resolution in various parts of the globe. We sincerely wish for peace to be established and reign in all those parts of the earth that are still being shaken by internal or other conflicts. We hope that the role and contribution of the Organization, with its reform programme fully implemented, will be further enhanced in this direction. All Member States should do their utmost to achieve this common objective. By so doing, the lead members will be able to provide better guidance through the United Nations, and all of us will work better together.

Albania is fully and unreservedly supportive of the Middle East peace process and of the intensive and ongoing efforts to bring that process back on track. Mutual confidence must somehow be restored, as it is the only alternative to ensuring continued progress in the peace negotiations. We are confident that the unsparing and concerted efforts under way will yield the awaited results.

We participated in and followed with great interest the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the environment and consider it to have made an important contribution to resolving the environmental problems affecting the earth. Similarly, Albania considers the special session on the fight against drugs and related activities, due to be held next year, as another very significant contribution to promoting and further strengthening international cooperation in this highly sensitive field.

The open debate in the Security Council last May on humanitarian crises and the protection of the civilian population was another indication that there is great concern, preparedness and political will to deal with these conflicts at an early stage, before they develop into real crises, thus playing a major preventive role. We all look forward to this. Prevention is the best medicine, because a problem can become very costly to treat and be hard to cure.

Albania has tried its best to make a modest contribution to the activities of the United Nations, including the significant fact that we are on the list of countries ready to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Our objective in future is to play an even more active role in this direction, as well as in operations of an international humanitarian character. One such objective has already been included in our platform for the reorganization and restructuring of the army.

We intend to play a more active role in the activities of main bodies of the Organization, including the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the leading bodies of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and others. Individual concerns should be treated as, and should become, the concerns of all. In addressing individual concerns, participation and contribution by all members of the community of States, each within its capacity and making available all possible resources, even if modest, will make the Organization more comprehensive and substantive, and its role genuinely more effective.

The Organization has started a process aimed at achieving the overall reform of the Organization and its system in order to make the United Nations and its role truly more effective and capable of coping with the new challenges and dynamics of the ever-changing world reality. To do so, all Members should live up to their obligations. We also feel the need for greater efforts to enhance efficiency, which would lead to an enhanced role for the Organization. Reform should not take place for reform's sake. We believe it should be our duty to define our needs in order to have reforms that are not only structural. We must ensure that money is saved not as a one-shot exercise but as a long-lasting process with its accent on transfers for the economic development of those who are most in need. We support action in this direction. We have taken very serious note of the work of the Secretary-General for United Nations reform in general, and of his proposals for the reform of the Secretariat. We appreciate his proposals and believe they represent the right approach.

The reform of the Security Council is one of the most sensitive issues and is part of the reform package. It took our Organization almost the half century of its existence to come to this point. No one can say for sure when, if at all, the Security Council will be reformed again in the future. Therefore, there might still be some work to be done in this direction, without necessarily making haste or getting caught up in endless discussions. With a clear objective, we will be able to show the maturity necessary to give the Council the right, balanced, flexible, democratic representation capable of successfully dealing with the challenges and objective of

the next century: to live in peace and harmony; to live in and leave to our children a better world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I call now on His Excellency Mr. Abel Matutes, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

Mr. Matutes (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like at the outset to make two imperative acknowledgments. The first is to congratulate Ambassador Hennadiy Udovenko on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly — and to congratulate the Assembly on the election of an insightful and experienced politician to preside over this session — which may, for many reasons, prove to be an exceptional one.

The second is addressed to the Secretary-General at this first regular session convened under his mandate. Mr. Kofi Annan is a veteran of the United Nations system, which explains how, in the short time since he took up the post of Secretary-General, he has been able to submit an important programme for the comprehensive reform of the Organization.

I wish also to state my Government's full support of the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. Spain shares the commitment of the European Union to the reform of the Organization; it is specifically upon this matter that my statement will be focused.

When we speak of the reform of the Organization, we frequently link it with the financial crisis which the United Nations is undergoing. Yet I consider it important to differentiate the two questions and to emphasize that the reform process must not be seen solely as a remedy or factor for saving the United Nations from the financial crisis. On the one hand, the current crisis is fundamentally a crisis of payments. I shall return to this matter later on. On the other hand, the Organization's supposed "failures" reflect the limits of cooperation in the international community as it exists at present.

The crisis is, in any case, one of growth. The United Nations has to adapt and do away with the bureaucratic obstacles accumulated by the Organization during the decades of the cold war and to develop new means with which to tackle the complex situations it now faces.

The great virtue of the reform programme introduced by the Secretary-General on 16 July is that, building on the better part of the thinking of recent years, it presents a comprehensive plan to adapt all sectors of the Organization. Recent experience has shown the difficulty of implementing partial reforms. The links among the main functions entrusted to the United Nations is becoming increasingly clear: international peace and security can hardly be maintained without genuine cooperation to promote the development of the world's States and regions, and without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I should like straight away to declare Spain's agreement with this approach and to make clear the backing which my country is willing to give to the Secretary-General's programme. I will now present the views of the Spanish Government on the main aspects of the overall reform process.

I shall begin with the reform of the Security Council. This is undoubtedly one of the most significant questions facing us, and its success will determine if the Organization will be able to enhance its legitimacy and its effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security in the future. The reform of the Security Council is a most sensitive task, involving an amendment to the Charter; it must therefore be undertaken carefully, without haste and on the basis of the broadest possible agreement. It must promote greater cohesion among the Organization's Members and not create greater tension and suspicion among them. We should not forget: poorly-done reform could bring grave repercussions for the Organization, which could lead to an irreparable crisis of confidence.

An increase in the number of members of the Security Council, and particularly of permanent members, is a much more contentious issue than the improvement of the Council's working procedures. The category of permanent members of the Security Council was created in historical circumstances which no longer apply. Furthermore, the enlargement of that category could create more problems than benefits. Therefore, we consider it wisest in the present situation to limit enlargement to the category of non-permanent members.

Current proposals for enlarging the permanent membership of the Security Council introduce formulas

which tend to meet the legitimate interests of a few States, but fail to resolve serious problems raised for the vast majority of Members of the Organization, and so they cannot be positive for the United Nations as a whole.

As far as the veto is concerned, aware of the difficulty in present circumstances of achieving its elimination, we propose that it be limited to situations involving Chapter VII of the Charter. In any case, proposals for the creation of new permanent seats, with postponement of discussion as to whether those seats would or would not have the veto, are not very realistic.

The leading role acquired by the United Nations at the end of the cold war in making, maintaining and consolidating peace is without historical precedent.

Spain unreservedly supports United Nations efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security. In the last year, in addition to the Spanish contingents deployed in the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and the Stabilization Force (SFOR), forces from my country have participated in the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) demobilization process and in the multinational protection force for Albania, which, as the Prime Minister stressed just a few minutes ago, has helped to avoid a serious internal conflict. Spain was also ready to participate in the multinational force for Zaire. My Government is also studying ways of enhancing the Organization's operational readiness, particularly by increasing its rapid deployment capabilities.

While dealing with this matter, I must refer briefly to certain situations of special interest to my Government. The deterioration of the situation in the Serb Republic is a cause of special concern. We must continue to give firm backing to those in the Republic who are willing to cooperate with SFOR, the High Representative and the special envoys.

Sub-Saharan Africa also deserves special attention. Of particular concern is the serious situation which persists in the Great Lakes region and in the Republic of Congo. Spain supports the efforts under way to restore peace, as well as the holding of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Likewise, with reference to the situation in Angola, Spain joins the appeal to UNITA to comply with its international commitments and to finally allow peace to come to this country.

My Government welcomes the recent agreements reached in Houston to unblock implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for Western Sahara, and accordingly wishes to congratulate Morocco and the Polisario Front. I equally wish to congratulate the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Baker, on the efficient mediation work he has performed. My Government considers that the holding of a referendum, freely and with international guarantees, in which the Sahraqui people will exercise their right to self-determination, continues to be the only acceptable solution to this conflict. Spain, which has always supported the settlement plan, considers therefore that the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is indispensable. My Government trusts that the parties will continue to demonstrate flexibility and a constructive spirit until the referendum is held.

Spain is also following developments in the Middle East with the greatest concern. The peace process is, without a doubt, going through one of its most difficult phases. However, this dialogue is the only possible alternative. The European Union, in particular through its Special Envoy, the Spanish diplomat Miguel Angel Moratinos, is making major efforts. I should like here to reiterate the Spanish Government's commitment to this process and to restate our willingness to continue to work actively for peace and understanding among the peoples of the region.

With the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala, a process in which Spain played an active role in the verification of compliance with the accords, the way has been paved to stability, the strengthening of democratic institutions and sustainable development in Guatemala. Spain will continue to support this process, through practical measures such as multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

As I have already indicated, peacekeeping has become a multifaceted activity. In addition to military activities, it has become essential to take into account the humanitarian consequences of conflicts. In fact, the humanitarian role of the United Nations is increasingly linked to peacekeeping. Spain accordingly supports the Secretary-General's initiatives to enhance the coordination and rapid deployment capability of the United Nations humanitarian response through the establishment of the Emergency Relief Coordination Office.

Together with my Government's official humanitarian aid, I must refer here to the commitment of Spanish civil society to such humanitarian operations, and pay tribute to all the international relief workers and missionaries who, generously and at risk to their very lives, are deployed in war-devastated areas. Five Spanish relief workers and four missionaries have been killed in recent months while performing their humanitarian tasks. Spain considers that additional measures must be adopted to protect those participating in these humanitarian missions, and we intend to introduce a proposal to that end during this session.

Recent experience of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda has highlighted the need to create a judicial body to prevent impunity and to facilitate reconciliation of war-torn societies and consolidate the peace process. The creation of an international criminal court is thus a matter to which the Spanish Government attaches great importance.

Concern for the protection and promotion of human rights, which is becoming one of the Organization's principal functions, underlies all these developments. As of 10 December and throughout 1998 we will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This will be an appropriate time to assess the situation and to devise strategies which will allow us to continue to move forward in the advancement of human rights.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, the United Nations human rights programme must be integrated into the whole range of the Organization's activities. Spain supports the Secretary-General's proposal to consolidate the Centre for Human Rights and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and stresses the need to increase the human and financial resources devoted to the human rights programme.

Spain will maintain an active policy in defence of human rights and will help to ensure general respect for human rights and for democratic principles.

Another of the Organization's major functions is cooperation for development. Spain welcomes the proposals put forward in this area by the Secretary-General. In particular, I should like to stress my support for the Secretary-General's various initiatives aimed at ensuring the release of more funds for operational programmes.

The inclusion in development cooperation activities of other than purely economic factors — such as social and environmental ones — is the expression of a concept to which the United Nations has given primary attention through a number of international conferences held under its auspices. I am referring to the subject of sustainable development.

I would like to underline in this respect the importance that the Spanish Government attaches to environmental matters and our special interest in the problem of desertification, which affects Spain so directly. I wish to note in this context that my country is presenting the candidature of Murcia as headquarters of the permanent secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification. I am convinced that Murcia would be an excellent headquarters, and I therefore ask Members for their support.

The attainment of effective international cooperation in the fight against terrorism is a priority objective for my Government. The phenomenon of terrorism cannot be controlled without complete and active cooperation at all levels. The conceptual advances made in the area of extradition that have taken place within the European Union must be furthered in the United Nations. The Spanish Government participates actively in the negotiations on the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, aimed at creating an effective tool in the fight against terrorism that is acceptable to the largest possible number of countries. Spain also supports the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism and the Supplement to that Declaration adopted by the Assembly at its last session.

In this connection, I cannot fail to mention the tragic situation in Algeria, a country which is a neighbour and a friend of Spain and which has the solidarity and support of my Government in its battle against the plague of terrorism. The Algerian Government can count on Spanish backing to continue resolutely the process of political reform, in order to achieve the widest possible base of support among the population, ensure peaceful and lasting coexistence and to eradicate terrorism.

The fight against drug trafficking is also a question of the greatest importance to Spain, and it is one that undoubtedly has connections with terrorism and transnational crime. My Government therefore supports the creation in Vienna of an international crime prevention centre designed to reinforce the Organization's capacity to combat these scourges.

Spain is pleased with the decisive role played by the United Nations in disarmament and arms control. Spain welcomes the outcome of the Oslo Conference and will be signing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, while promoting discussion of this question in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament.

The preparation of a protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention — particularly in the field of verification; the negotiation of a convention to ban fissionable material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons; and the improvement of control and transparency in conventional weapons: these are also matters of importance.

The process of decolonization has without any doubt been one of the Organization's greatest successes. It may therefore seem anachronistic to refer to this matter in a statement that deals with the reform of the United Nations and that focuses on the present and the most immediate future, rather than on the past. The reality, however, is that unresolved colonial situations unfortunately continue to exist, and our Organization still has to deal with them.

With regard to these situations, Spain is affected directly and painfully by the question of Gibraltar. The existence of this colony on our territory — the colony of a State that, like Spain, belongs, to the Atlantic Alliance and to the European Union — is an anomaly and an anachronism that we are trying to resolve within the context of the doctrine established by the United Nations. In resolution 2353 (XXII), and in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV), the General Assembly acknowledged that the colonial status of Gibraltar violates Spanish territorial integrity and that the principle of self-determination therefore does not apply. The territory of Gibraltar was an integral part of Spain, and the Spaniards who lived there were expelled when a military base was established.

Pursuant to the repeated invitations made by the United Nations to Spain and to the United Kingdom to settle this matter by negotiation, my Government is engaged in the search for a solution through the bilateral channel established in the Brussels Declaration of November 1984. The Spanish authorities have given repeated assurances that the legitimate interests of the inhabitants of Gibraltar will be respected. I very recently and publicly formulated a most generous offer whereby, following the reincorporation of Gibraltar into Spain, the current inhabitants of the colony would be allowed to retain the broad outlines of their present economic and legal situation. We believe that this offer should help us advance in the bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom.

We all agree on to the irreplaceable nature of our Organization and on the need to reform it. However, our Organization cannot prosper, nor can the reforms be put in place, if we Member States do not comply in full with our financial commitments. As the Secretary-General himself has pointed out, the Organization's present financial crisis is a payments crisis. The punctual and full payment of contributions is an international legal obligation that should be recognized by all States that respect the international rule of law. It is unacceptable that any Member State should place conditions on these payments or on the payment of arrears. Such a practice would lead eventually to the bankruptcy of the Organization we defend.

As early as 1996, the European Union introduced a proposal designed to encourage States to meet their financial obligations to the Organization and to establish a fairer scale of assessments. Spain hopes that this proposal will be carefully considered at this session.

The United Nations is the main international forum entrusted with maintaining international peace and security, with promoting development, human rights and fundamental freedoms and with ensuring cooperation between States. The indispensable nature of its role has become clear in recent years.

Finally, I would like to restate the Spanish Government's firm commitment to the purposes contained in the Charter of the United Nations and to reassert our unshakeable determination to continue to participate in the reform process in the firm belief that, together, we will be able to adapt the United Nations to the requirements of the new millennium.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, His Excellency Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson.

Mr. Asgrimsson (Iceland): May I begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the fifty-second session of General Assembly and pledging to him the full support of my delegation.

The new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has already put his mark on the United Nations, after less than nine months in office. He has led efforts to reform our Organization in an effective, fair and balanced manner. I congratulate him and pledge the unwavering support of my Government for his important mission.

Increasingly, as we approach the new millennium, we have come to appreciate the value of international cooperation, as most clearly demonstrated by the historic first meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)/Russia Permanent Joint Council in a ministerial session that took place here in this building today.

The information revolution is advancing, and a new sense of global neighbourhood and the gradual abolition of trade barriers are raising the level of economic well-being in different parts of the world. At the same time, the world community is faced with challenges of a new order of magnitude, making it necessary for Governments to pool their resources and work together.

Global forces are in many ways eroding the traditional boundaries between nation States. The trend calls for the strengthening of international organizations competent to tackle issues that no single State or groups of States can deal with in isolation. Consequently, it is crucial that we strengthen the United Nations. Without a reinvigorated United Nations, the international community will not be in a position to address the foremost challenges confronting the twenty-first century.

Sadly, our Organization has not been endowed to meet those challenges. Demands on the United Nations are greater than ever, and the limited resources at the Organization's disposal are grossly disproportionate to the tasks in hand. The question inevitably arises: Do we wish to give the United Nations a clear and focused mandate and empower it to carry that mandate out? In my opinion our answer should be the same as the one Winston Churchill once gave:

"Give us the tools and we will finish the job".

Once more we must urge all Member States to pay their contributions to the Organization fully and on time. The Secretary-General's reform initiative is the most comprehensive attempt to date at fashioning the United Nations of tomorrow into an instrument capable of serving the common interests of all peoples, guided by the enduring tenets of peace, human rights, the rule of law and social progress, enshrined in the Charter more than half a century ago. Coming at the end of a thorough and useful debate, the Secretary-General's report is in large part a distillation of views expressed by individual Governments.

Inevitably, the report represents a compromise, unlikely to accommodate all the wishes of a single State or group of States. But, taken as a whole, it represents the best effort to obtain what is realistically feasible under the circumstances. The reform package should, in our opinion, be accepted as an integral whole.

A focused discussion on the Secretary-General's report should give a boost to the ongoing debate among Member States on an increase in the membership of the Security Council, as well as a more equitable representation on the Council. The Nordic countries have jointly presented their ideas on this issue. Iceland welcomes the paper submitted by the Chairman of the Security Council Working Group, which is largely in line with the suggestions of the Nordic countries, and hopes that efforts to resolve this fundamental aspect of the entire reform process may be brought to a successful conclusion during the current session.

Although the reform of our Organization and its long-term credibility must have a high priority, regional conflicts continually demand our attention.

In the Middle East, the situation has rarely been more uncertain since the signing of the Oslo accords. The parties to the accords must not be distracted from pursuing the path of peace. They should refrain from creating unnecessary hurdles in the path of peace by provocative undertakings likely to cause hostility, suspicion and fear. There should be a clear and unambiguous recognition that terrorism against innocent civilians is wholly incompatible with the pursuit of peace. Both parties have to ensure that international norms in the field of human rights and humanitarian law are respected.

A troubled African continent remains at the top of the United Nations agenda. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Great Lakes region, the situation is worrying. The United Nations, in cooperation with regional leaders and organizations, must spare no effort to prevent the peoples of this region from further suffering.

By contrast, encouraging developments have taken place in Western Sahara, where direct talks, held under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-

General, have greatly improved prospects for a referendum on the future of the region.

Arms control and disarmament will continue to occupy an important place in the activities of our Organization. Our most immediate goal should be in the area of conventional arms: to work for a comprehensive ban on that most terrible destroyer of the lives and limbs of innocent people, the anti-personnel landmine. The recently concluded Oslo conference on this menace has provided a welcome impetus to work towards a binding treaty. Iceland strongly urges all States to banish this inhumane weapon from their arsenals.

Human rights, which are of intrinsic value in themselves, are also a vital part of efforts to secure peace and stability in areas torn by wars and internal conflict. Next year marks the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My Government applauds the Secretary-General's proposed streamlining of the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights, bearing witness to a strong emphasis on this crucially important aspect of our work.

Unfortunately, the human rights of women continue to be disregarded. As the Secretary-General observed in this forum earlier this week, violence against women has become the most pervasive human rights violation. The international community must work harder to correct this situation and to improve the lot of women everywhere, not least through the creation of better education and employment opportunities.

Trafficking in drugs is a peril that recognizes no national boundaries. To a greater or lesser degree, we are all affected by it. In addition to the cost in human lives and suffering, we are witness to calamities that follow in the wake of drug abuse, the spread of AIDS, prostitution and crime. Iceland welcomes United Nations efforts in the area of drug prevention and looks forward to the special session of the General Assembly on the problem of drugs next June.

Next year has been declared the International Year of the Ocean by the United Nations. The world's oceans are a crucial part of the earth's biosphere, in addition to being the single largest source of protein for mankind. This vital resource is now threatened in some regions of the world. Therefore, it is important that the Year of the Ocean be used to raise public awareness and to reinforce efforts to protect the marine ecosystem. A global, legally binding agreement should be concluded to limit the emission of persistent organic pollutants.

Problems afflicting the marine ecosystem call for greater coordination at the global level, and also in the sustainable use, conservation and management of living marine resources. At the same time, we must recognize that the primary responsibility for harvesting marine resources in a sustainable manner rests with the States that depend on such resources for survival. Also, while Governments must work with non-governmental organizations, there is a need to resist the indiscriminate pressure of unaccountable protectionist groups that wish to sever the vital link between environmental protection and economic self-interest.

Although not yet in force, the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, which provides a framework for regional cooperation in the conservation and management of these stocks, has already had a positive impact. In the North Atlantic, for instance, fisheries-management conventions are under review in order, *inter alia*, to adjust them to the provisions of this Agreement. Iceland urges Member States to ratify the Agreement.

As a new member of the Economic and Social Council, Iceland welcomed the thorough discussion on fostering an enabling environment for development during this year's substantive session. It is of grave concern that the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen. At a time of vastly expanded trade and investment in the world, the least developed countries have seen their share of world trade drop by half in two decades. Many of them are threatened with exclusion from world markets and economic marginalization.

The key elements for attaining sustainable economic development are a sound policy framework that encourages stable growth, a vigorous private sector, the strengthening of institutional and legal foundations and, last but not least, good-governance and anti-corruption measures. At the same time, we need to focus on human-development strategies. The strengthening of education and school systems and health and social services must be an integral part of any sound strategy for development.

We must mobilize the dynamic private sector, together with bilateral and multilateral official

development assistance to secure sustainable growth and poverty reduction in developing countries.

As the chairman of the Nordic and the Baltic constituency of the World Bank's Development Committee, I emphasize the important role of the World Bank Group in development cooperation. I would like to reiterate what I stated in Hong Kong earlier this week: that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative must result in a permanent solution to the unsustainable debt burden of the countries in question.

Finally, this is a time of extraordinary challenges for the United Nations and its Member States. This is why we need a vigorous, strong and confident Organization, capable of leading the way into the next century. For such an Organization to become a reality we must now focus on effective and meaningful reform. We should use the momentum and not fritter away our time in long-winded and familiar debates. Now we have an opportunity we may not have again any time soon.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-second Session

14th plenary meeting
Friday, 26 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Crown Prince Albert *(interpretation from French):* It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your outstanding election. Your competence and your vast experience in multilateral diplomacy, to which you have devoted a large part of your professional life, together with your personal qualities assure us that our work will be conducted properly and be successful.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay a well-earned tribute to Ambassador Razali of Malaysia for the effective way in which he conducted the fifty-first session of our General Assembly.

I congratulate, also, the members of the Bureau, who I am convinced stand ready to do their utmost to ensure the success of this important session.

It is in fact an important session because, upon the invitation of the Secretary-General, it is being devoted largely to an exchange of views, which I hope will be productive, on the reform of the Organization.

The document before us, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", is of the greatest interest to my country's authorities. The desire to make the Organization, and above all its Secretariat, more efficient by improving the coherence and coordination of its activities is the very judicious inspiration for the proposed reform process. That desire is easy to understand and endorse, given its obvious responsiveness to current real needs.

During the 52 years of its existence, the United Nations has regularly been challenged by the requirements of an ever changing world and has thus been led to develop or create new structures — without, however, always reducing or suppressing old ones.

The current exceptionally broad changes in the political, economic and social spheres irresistibly call for

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a profound transformation of multilateral cooperation. They require the Organization to make an ineluctable effort to adapt that cannot be delayed without jeopardizing its prestige and seeing its international role inexorably wither. Thus, we can only endorse the will demonstrated by the General Assembly at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the recent initiatives undertaken. In our view, it is rational to concentrate and better coordinate the Organization's missions around the five great pillars of its Charter responsibilities: international peace and security, development, humanitarian affairs, economic and social affairs and human rights.

The promotion and protection of human rights, which the Secretary-General very rightly proposes to strengthen, receive the intersectoral treatment which their multidisciplinary nature naturally evokes. That nature must not allow us to forget, however, that this fundamental area of the Organization's competence requires the strengthening of its appropriate structures. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, who has just assumed her office — and whose arrival we welcome sincerely and confidently — must be given sufficient human and financial resources, as well as the decision-making autonomy, necessary to fulfil the essential duties that have fallen to her.

Next year's celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be an opportunity to recall the commitments undertaken by the Member States when they adopted that text on 10 December, 1948, and, a few years later, on 16 December 1966, the two international human rights agreements which, I am pleased to say, the Principality has recently ratified.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator entrusted with humanitarian assistance must also enjoy the greatest autonomy and the means necessary to allow him to intervene effectively and promptly when necessary — a task that the Government of the Principality accords the highest priority.

This autonomy must, more generally, touch the entire international civil services. The independence of United Nations agents — the Secretary-General first among them — is the guarantee of the quality of their service and of the trust which the international community places in them.

The decision to bring together all the field programmes and information centres in common premises, to be known as United Nations Houses, is both rational and symbolic. It is an ideal response to the current needs to concentrate and better coordinate operational activities, while promoting a strong and cohesive image of the entire system. We strongly encourage the Secretary-General to pursue this approach, which has recently been undertaken in South Africa.

For those States that will not have the opportunity to host such Houses, might we not consider establishing a United Nations presence in the form of a volunteer honourary representative: a national figure mandated, alongside the authorities, to disseminate information and heighten general awareness? The widespread practice of appointing honourary consuls could, in this respect, serve as an example.

The special team dedicated to reorienting information activities highlights, in the Secretary-General's report, a need which we understand: to improve and enlarge the United Nations capacity to communicate at the country level through innovative local partnerships. The establishment of honourary United Nations representatives would be one way to follow up that suggestion on a practical and affordable level.

As the Secretary-General points out, public interest in the United Nations could also be sharpened by the organization of high-level thematic debates within General Assembly bodies. We agree with this, given that such debates would receive more attention from the press and public opinion than those currently held and would lessen the need for large world conferences.

The Security Council has already taken steps to improve information services and exchanges with Member States that are not members of the Council and with the international community at large. These steps are useful and welcome and are beginning to bear fruit.

The important question of enlarging the membership of that principal organ, which depends on a decision from the Member States, is also of great interest to us. The High-level Working Group on that subject has worked tremendously hard under the leadership of successive Presidents of the General Assembly and the dedication of its Vice-Presidents. We convey to them our warmest thanks. The Principality of Monaco is ready to endorse unreservedly any commitment or solution that might be achieved, including the creation of long-term seats lasting six to 10 years, for example.

In tandem with the improvement already begun in the functioning of the Economic and Social Council, some considered attention also appears to be necessary to the Trusteeship Council. The suggestions made by the Secretary-General seem to us to be wise and far-sighted.

The Principality of Monaco could support the idea of entrusting that organ with new trusteeship responsibilities in the spheres of the environment and the protection of the common human patrimony. Outer space, the atmosphere, the high seas, as well as the free zones of the Arctic and Antarctic — especially in the spirit of the 1959 Treaty — would all stand to gain, under certain conditions, by being placed within its competence. The Council might also be entrusted with the ongoing task of considering the great transformations that would be entailed by predictable advances in science and technology.

We must hope that the proposed reforms will be speedily enacted, so that the Millennium Assembly proposed by the Secretary-General for the year 2000 will indeed be an occasion for celebrating an updated and modernized United Nations.

The Principality, which this year is celebrating the 700th anniversary of my family's dynasty in Monaco, can only wish long life to a United Nations strengthened and more open to civil society.

Turning now to the nearer future, allow me to emphasize the importance that my country attaches to concluding the work on the international criminal court, which should lead to a plenipotentiary diplomatic conference next year in Rome. A collective morality that is universal in scope cannot exist without institutions to disseminate it, implement it and ensure its respect.

The adoption of a Convention on anti-personnel landmines, which continue to inflict their savagery on civilian populations, has long been one of our goals. Is not respect for the dignity and physical integrity of human beings one of the most essential and universally recognized values, one that underlies both human rights and humanitarian law?

The meeting convened by Canada last October and the series of meetings held in Vienna, Bonn and Brussels this year, as well as the diplomatic conference that recently took place in Oslo have led to the drafting of a text, which, in the spirit of resolution 51/45 S, prohibits not only the use but also the development, stockpiling and transfer of such mines. We truly welcome this development.

In the same vein, I should like to note that the Principality has recently submitted its instruments of accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, a Convention that we believe constitutes great progress in the rules of warfare.

Next year will be the International Year of the Ocean, for which we are making active preparations. The marine environment laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Monaco has recently moved into new, spacious and functional offices made available to it by our Government. That laboratory, thanks to its modern equipment, is helping to identify sources and new chemical markers of marine pollution. It regularly organizes training courses and consultative missions, and it is actively contributing, with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, to the MEDPOL programme to combat pollution in the Mediterranean — an issue of great interest to us.

The International Year of the Ocean should provide an opportunity to strengthen such programmes as well as international cooperation to promote the preservation and management of marine resources, including certain fish stocks and marine mammals. At the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the environment last June, many delegations emphasized these issues. Echoing the Commission on Sustainable Development, some quite rightly recalled the need regularly to assess, on an intergovernmental level and in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the quality of the marine environment. This has been done for almost 20 years in France, Italy and Monaco under the RAMOGE programme. We hope that other regional cooperation activities of this nature will develop in 1998.

For coastal States as well as for the international community, the oceans and the seas must be a protected, shared space, sparingly exploited — not a place for intense economic confrontation.

Finally, like the European Union, whose views on many issues we share, the Principality of Monaco remains very concerned by the continued financial crisis in the United Nations. This crisis can be resolved only if Member States comply strictly with their commitments and pay in full, on time and without conditions their contributions to the regular and peacekeeping budgets as well as all accumulated arrears.

As a member of the International Olympic Committee, I am pleased once again to remind the Assembly that the Winter Olympic Games will be held next February in Nagano, Japan. The General Assembly at its fifty-first session invited Member States, through resolution 50/13, to respect a truce before, during and after both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games. Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal must remain our motto at that great international meeting of the youth of the world.

Finally, I should like to convey my deep sorrow, shared by my father and by the people of Monaco, at the loss of lives resulting from the forest fires — an ecological cataclysm — that are raging in Sumatra, Indonesia, and from the air disaster that occurred in Maden this morning, as well as at the tragic results of last night's earthquake in the Italian peninsula. I should like to extend, on my own behalf and on behalf of my father and the people of Monaco, our deepest condolences and sympathy.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness, Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Theodoros Pangalos.

Mr. Pangalos (Greece): Before I begin my speech, may I associate myself with the final appeal made by Prince Albert of Monaco, who preceded me at this rostrum. Perhaps this Organization can be instrumental in achieving an Olympic truce for the Olympic Games of 2000 and for those of 2004, which we will host in Athens. I think that this is an initiative that the Organization should take seriously.

Allow me to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election. Your qualities and skills augur well for the progress of this session. Moreover, I am especially pleased to salute in your person a representative of the Ukraine, a country with which Greece maintains long-standing friendly relations. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the effective manner in which he performed his functions.

The Greek Government is impressed with the way the new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has been discharging his duties. His great experience warrants the hope that his ongoing endeavours aiming at the reform of this Organization will be crowned with success.

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On this occasion, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations membership at large for electing Greece to one of the positions of Vice-President of the General Assembly.

Earlier this week, the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, delivered a statement to which my Government fully subscribes; we subscribe as well as to the Union's memorandum, which has been submitted to the Assembly. I would like, however, to elaborate further on some issues of particular interest to my country.

As the millennium draws to a close, Greece, located at a crossroads of countries and civilizations, is striving to free the twenty-first century from the scourges of the past, thus offering to our region prospects of progress and prosperity. We are the only member of both the European Union and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in our region, and we thus we function as the latter's link to Europe, guided by our firm belief that conflicts and prejudices have to be overcome through respect for international law and the principles of the United Nations.

In this context, we believe that Greece is able to play an important role in the Security Council and are therefore seeking election to that body, to one of the two non-permanent seats allocated to the Group of Western European and Other States for the biennium 1999-2000. Deeply dedicated to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, we are ready to take our share of responsibility for international peace and security. Indeed, Greece has been actively participating in several peacekeeping operations as a troop-contributing country.

This year, we became a member of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. We have advocated the Committee's expansion as a positive step forward, and we support any effort aimed at improving the peacekeeping capabilities of the United Nations. Furthermore, Greece has confirmed its willingness to

participate in the stand-by arrangements system and has joined other Member States in the continued efforts to enable the Organization to react more quickly and more efficiently to future peacekeeping requirements. As I reaffirm our palpable commitment to peacekeeping, I wish also to express my country's deep appreciation for the courage and dedication shown by peacekeeping personnel in confronting challenges to peace and security.

Comprehensive reform and restructuring of the United Nations system, including the size and working methods of the Security Council, must be attained with a view to meeting the changing needs of the world community as it moves into the next millennium. The reform package presented by the Secretary-General in July is a response to this necessity and constitutes a welcome step towards modernizing and strengthening the United Nations. Greece will contribute in a constructive and positive way to the success of the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General through his proposals.

We live in a world characterized by globalization and the introduction of new technologies; hence, the United Nations is called upon to pursue a broader set of objectives focusing on democratic development, sustainable development and higher living standards for all citizens of the world. The political commitment of its Member States and their contribution of adequate resources constitute the two fundamental prerequisites for the success of the United Nations. In this context, we welcome the determination of all Member States, in particular those that play a major role in the Organization's decision-making process, to fulfil their financial obligations on time and in full.

Greece, a State Member of the United Nations since 1945, will continue to honour its obligations to the United Nations, gradually increasing its annual contribution to the peacekeeping operations budget, moving from group C to group B on its own initiative.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, held last June, gave us the opportunity five years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Conference, to renew and reinforce our commitment to sustainable development. Greece, with one third of the coastline of the entire Mediterranean basin and almost 3,000 islands, has a specific interest in promoting the management of coastal zones, sustainable tourism, sustainable water management and policies to combat desertification and deforestation.

We have been uninterruptedly implementing a long-term strategy for the protection of the environment while sharing with the international community the belief that Agenda 21 can be implemented only through a sense of common responsibility. However, the major environmental problems of our planet cannot be successfully tackled if socio-economic ills such as poverty are not combatted and eradicated.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, the prospect of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem has, regrettably, remained elusive. For 23 years now Turkey has maintained more than 35,000 occupation troops on the island, blatantly defying international law. At the same time, the Turkish Cypriot population, for the protection of which the invasion was allegedly undertaken, has dwindled dramatically since 1974, due to political oppression coupled with the massive influx of settlers from mainland Turkey.

The Government of Greece aims at a reunited Cyprus, a common home to all of its inhabitants. We maintain that a settlement on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations and the high- level agreements of 1977 and 1979 can bring peace and reconciliation to the island. Such a settlement should provide for a bizonal and bicommunal federation with a single sovereignty and international personality and with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded through effective international guarantees. There is no doubt that a functional solution of the Cyprus problem would eliminate a source of instability in the region and contribute to the improvement of Turkish-Greek relations.

The main obstacle, however, remains Turkey's aim of legitimizing the status quo. Ankara's negative stance and lack of political will were once again displayed during the direct talks recently held under the auspices of the Secretary-General at Glion-sur-Montreux. As the President of the Security Council pointed out in an informed briefing to the press,

> "substantive progress at this time was impeded by the attempt to bring preconditions to the table by the other party, and here of course I mean the Turkish Cypriots."

On the other hand, the constructive stance of the Cypriot President, Mr. Clerides, at the talks was praised by the President of the Council in the same statement. His

proposal for the demilitarization of Cyprus must retain our thorough attention.

Greece unwaveringly supports the process of Cyprus's accession to the European Union, which will commence at the near future. We believe that its accession will benefit all the island's inhabitants. It could also act as a catalyst for the solution of the political problem. We sincerely hope that Turkey will eventually realize the benefits of the accession of Cyprus to the European Union, especially for the Turkish Cypriot population, and will change its present stance.

Our relations with Turkey have taken an additional downturn since 1996, when our neighbour added direct territorial claims to the existing policy of demands, threats of war and constant pressure, in an attempt to subvert the territorial status quo established more than 70 years ago by international law and treaties. Its attempt to back these claims by military means in January 1996 resulted in a crisis that just fell short of war.

Greece, while determined to protect, by all legitimate means, its sovereign rights stemming from international law, sincerely agrees that there is a need to establish normal good neighbourly relations, based on the principles of international law and respect for international treaties — something which Turkey seems determined to ignore.

It has been a consistent policy of our Government that Greek-Turkish relations should be addressed in a context of respect for international law and treaties. Greece has made it its policy to channel such relations through accepted rules of behaviour and the principles recognized in international life. The Madrid Joint Statement, signed by Turkey's President, Mr. Demirel, and the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Simitis, provides a welcome initiative which might contribute to a gradual improvement.

The problems that really exist must be dealt with by legal means provided for by international law, and specifically through the International Court of Justice. Such a step would open possibilities for a gradual build-up of good-neighbourly relations and the establishment of confidence and cooperation in every field. In this sense, we are waiting for a move by the new Turkish Government to work in this direction — away from statements and acts which confuse the issue and relate to a past that we must transcend by means of those principles of international law that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and that our gathering here pledges to serve.

In the Balkan Peninsula, the area where Greece itself is located, the situation is gradually improving. My county has played an active role within the framework of various international activities designed to promote peace, stability, good neighbourliness and development in the area.

Greece values its historical relations with Albania. It is committed to continuing to work for the strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in all fields and to extending assistance for the rehabilitation of the country, in particular after the recent crisis. Our contribution to Operation Alba and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) presence has been essential and prompt.

The Greek minority in Albania will remain an important factor of friendship between the two peoples, actively contributing to the progress of their country.

Greece fully supports the process initiated with the Dayton Agreement. Maintaining excellent relations with all actors in the Yugoslav drama, we contribute substantially in keeping the peace. We have sent out massive humanitarian aid from governmental and non-governmental sources alike; we have deployed our soldiers with the Stabilization Force (SFOR); we have sent observers both on the European Community Monitor Mission and OSCE teams; and we are actively engaged in reconstruction work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am proud to report that we are among the few not only to put forward the money pledged at the 1996 Donors' Conference, but actually to have brought to completion the programmes we undertook to fulfil. Furthermore, we are increasing our contribution for 1997, by 35 per cent. All this, I must note, took place while we were massively engaged in stemming both the Albanian crisis and the deterioration of the financial situation in Bulgaria. Persistence in implementing the Dayton Agreement, encouraging democratization and opening up to the market economy and to the international community will provide guidance for all on ways to overcome present difficulties and will enable all actors to normalize their relations with each other, the United Nations and the international community in general.

Honouring the Interim Accord with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), we continue talks under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vance, about the final name of that country. We hope that the Skopje

Government will realize the need for an early solution to this issue.

In the multilateral field, we have persistently promoted the process of cooperation and good neighbourliness in southeastern Europe, actively participating in such regional schemes as Royaumont, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Balkan Cooperation, and Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The Declaration adopted in Thessaloniki on 10 June 1997 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries of southeastern Europe has given a substantial impetus to this process.

In the same spirit, in early November Greece will host in Crete a summit of countries of southeastern Europe.

The situation in the Middle East continues to concern us. In fact, recent terrorist actions like those in Jerusalem, as well as the tragic situation in the West Bank and Gaza, constitute the tangible consequences of the stagnation of the peace process. Revival of both the peace process and the peace hope requires adherence to and full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and international agreements. The parties have to live up to their commitments. Real peace is a just and global one — in Israel as well as in Lebanon, where the need to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) continues to be painfully felt. Greece supports any efforts which could have positive results, and hence we encourage those undertaken by the European Union's Special Envoy in the Middle East. Moreover, our country is willing to offer any assistance aimed at the strengthening of peace and stability, security, and economic and social progress, as well as the establishment of confidence among all parties to the Middle East problem, in favour of the peoples of the area.

Greece is following with particular interest the recent developments in Africa, auspicious or ominous as they appear. Indeed, an increasing number of African countries are adopting pluralism as a form of Government and open-market principles for their economy. It Is Greece's belief that on the eve of the twenty-first century the international community must encourage and assist African countries to promote pluralism, respect for human rights and a free-market economy. Important developments will take place during this century in Africa.

Latin America, with which Greece has traditional ties of friendship, is consolidating the pace of development of recent years. Also, through successful regional integration, the countries of the region are assuming a stature on a worldwide scale that truly reflects the importance of the progress the region has achieved.

Last June's Bucharest Meeting between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a telling example. Greece, both bilaterally and as a member of the European Union, is looking forward to an increasing, comprehensive and substantial dialogue with the Latin American countries, to the benefit of international cooperation, trade liberalization, and stability.

The United Nations remains mankind's best hope for jointly solving the problems that collectively beset the world community. We therefore fully support the call for the reform of the United Nations. However, we strongly believe that any decision regarding the future form and function of our Organization should be taken by consensus and should reflect the needs and aspirations of all Member States — big and small, rich and poor alike — in whose hands and political will the destiny of the United Nations lies. Greece is prepared to shoulder its share of responsibility in this ongoing reform process.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Mtara Maecha, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic and the Minister for Transport, Tourism, Posts and Telecommunications of Comoros, on whom I now call.

Mr. Maecha (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): The unanimous election of the President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations was a tribute not only to his outstanding diplomatic qualities, but also to his country, Ukraine — with which the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros fully intends to have good relations of friendship and cooperation. I would like to associate myself with the previous speakers in extending to him, on behalf of my delegation, our warm congratulations and to wish him all success in carrying out his noble task.

Allow me also to pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the dedication and skill with which he guided the work and shouldered the task of President of the fifty-first session of our General Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his outstanding election. I would like to express our deep gratitude to this illustrious

advocate of the ideals of peace, solidarity and justice for his unswerving dedication to the service of our institution. His experience in international affairs, together with his personal qualities, clearly guarantees that the United Nations will be given new impetus as it faces the new challenges confronting it.

At a time when we are meeting in the General Assembly to assess — as is our custom — the work carried out by our Organization in the areas of peacekeeping, the strengthening of international cooperation, the development of reforms required if the United Nations is to adapt to the needs of our time, we are obliged to note that the world continues to fall prey to numerous types of threats, tensions and ills of all sorts.

Thus, it is obvious that our Organization must play a very critical and primary role. However, in this period of globalization — of the obvious and irrevocable interdependence of nations, democracy, good governance and transparency in the management of public affairs — our Organization remains the target of those who wish to minimize and limit its role by preventing it from paying still greater attention to the problems of poor and disadvantaged countries. It goes without saying that this concept is not conducive to promoting the atmosphere of *detente* in international relations that has been awaited for so long.

Bearing in mind the noble tasks for which the Organization was founded, in particular the building of a just, peaceful and better integrated world society, it would be wise and reasonable for the major concerns of our Organization, since the end of the cold war, to be mobilization for disarmament and the search for solutions that can encourage the development policies of States, cooperation and international solidarity.

The trials and tribulations of history have once again placed my country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, on the first page of international news. The tragic events of the last few months are the result of an unprecedented social and economic crisis which is battering my country. Indeed, counted among the least developed countries, over the last few years the Comoran State has witnessed a deterioration of the markets for its export products — vanilla, cloves, perfume oils, and so forth — due to strong international competition.

The poor sales of these products, which are the major sources of revenue for the State, and therefore for a majority of the inhabitants of the Comoros, have been compounded by the devaluation of our currency, without appropriate accompanying measures. This economic state of affairs has only served to exacerbate the already poor and vulnerable condition of a considerable sector of the population of the Comoros. Here I have in mind the galloping unemployment and the rising curve of poverty.

In this situation, which is of concern in many ways, the authorities of the Comoros, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, decided on a number of measures aimed at balancing State revenues and expenditures. These include a reduction in gross salaries; the privatization of State firms; a reduction of the operational State budget; and the launching of projects to generate revenue and permanent jobs.

These new guidelines were put forth on the eve of the free and democratic elections organized under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the European Union and the United Nations. On 16 March 1996, these elections carried President Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim to the highest post in my country.

Indeed, the catastrophic situation inherited by the newly elected President required the swiftest possible start of political, economic and social reforms capable of meeting the numerous challenges impeding the building of a democratic, prosperous and united society.

Among the efforts made along these lines by the new political authorities of the Comoros, we could mention the regular payment since 1997 of State officials' salaries.

However, despite this new impetus, the discontent spawned by a series of crises and tragedies in my country's recent history finally caught up with the harsh socio-economic facts of life of the Comorian people.

Expressed in different ways, in line with the susceptibilities on all sides, the rumblings of this discontent got out of bounds on the Comorian island of Anjouan. Indeed, since March 1997, various movements — both trade union and political — coalesced into an organization whose activism threatens the very heart of the Comorian State.

From the illegal occupation of public buildings to the trampling underfoot of the national flag, these factions sowing terror on the island of Anjouan used all kinds of methods to provoke the central power.

These outrageous actions, which have been unanimously condemned by the international community, were exacerbated by the proclamation of a pseudo-independence of the island of Anjouan.

Despite all these acts of provocation, the President of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, determined to preserve peace and national unity, opted for the path of dialogue and agreed action. Within this framework, the Government of the Comoros requested the mediation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of this domestic crisis.

As a result of the discussions initiated by the OAU mission, certain decisions, accepted by all sides, were taken designed to facilitate a return to normalcy — in particular, the withdrawal of military reinforcements, the provision to the island of vitally necessary foodstuffs, the organization of examinations at the end of the school year, and so on.

The response to this spirit of reconciliation by the separatists was the continuation of one act of escalation after another; they occupied the presidential residence at Hombo, in Anjouan and levied direct and indirect taxes on the island, having emptied the coffers of the State.

Faced with such an exacerbation of the situation, which was a violation of the authority of the State, the Government was obliged to send a military mission to Anjouan to re-establish public and Republican order.

This mission, which began on the morning of 2 September, had nearly achieved its goal by 4 September, without bloodshed. But the subsequent turn of events led the President of the Republic, still determined to preserve civil order, to take the necessary emergency measures under article 20 of the Constitution of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, dealing with full powers.

This is why, acting under this Article, a State transition commission was appointed and given the prerogatives normally given members of the Government: to carry on the conduct of current affairs of State; to continue the indispensable negotiations begun with the OAU, the United Nations, the League of Arab States and all other bodies involved in the search for a solution to the crisis afflicting the country; to implement and give concrete form to solutions agreed on, in consultation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); to prepare for signature the programme of adjustment with the Bretton Woods institutions; and to prepare the final procedures for ultimate signature of the eighth European Development Fund, in collaboration with the European Union and the countries of the Asian, Caribbean and Pacific region.

During this transitional stage it should be possible to restructure institutions with a view to giving the islands of the Republic broad management autonomy and more active participation in the process of development in the islands of the Comoros as a whole.

At a time when my country's territorial integrity remains threatened, at a time when arbitrary separatist actions are again battering my country, I should like from this rostrum to launch a heartfelt appeal to the entire international community to assist the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros to eradicate the ills which are destroying it, namely underdevelopment and destabilization.

While it is true that we must first and foremost count on our own strengths, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros also knows that it can count on the United Nations, our Organization, with its specialized agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The Comoros also knows it can count on OAU, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the European Union.

We can only reiterate here our full confidence in, and deep gratitude for, the tireless and determined efforts they have unceasingly made to ensure the economic development of, and peace and security for, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros.

After this broad overview of the terrible events which my country is enduring, we are obliged to note that, today, more than ever before, the question of underdevelopment remains the major source of threats to peace and international security.

While we recognize that on the threshold of the third millennium our Organization remains the guarantor of the emancipation of peoples and the progressive elimination of poverty, it is also incontestable that the daily struggle with hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy and the problem of ensuring good health for everyone are challenges to our collective conscience.

What can more significantly illustrate the will of our institution to eradicate these scourges than the series of conferences which have been held throughout the past decade? I have in mind the New York World Summit for Children, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, the Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements, and the Rome World Food Summit. All these conferences aroused great hopes in all of mankind but their effects are still in an embryonic stage, particularly for the developing, least developed and island countries.

The hopes born of these international meetings are like a distant horizon that seems to recede as one gets nearer to it.

The Government of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros reaffirms its support for the reforms recommended for our Organization, in particular those relating to the enlargement of the Security Council, since our evolving world has taken on new contours. These include new forms of violence, and our current means of dealing with them seems increasingly inadequate and unsuitable. The strengthening and maintenance of peace within States is today a new concern of our Organization, confronted as it is by civil wars, genocide, ethnic cleansing, terrorism, mercenaries and all forms of transnational crime.

The new international political landscape is, to be sure, a result of the new forms of tension, which tend to overshadow some of the conflicts well known to our Organization.

Since horrors know no limits, the Comoros Government is still concerned by the resurgence of violence in the Middle East, which has had a negative effect on the dynamism that had been set in motion by the signing of the Oslo agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Thus the provocations by the new Israeli authorities, the continuation of the settlement policy, the closing off of Palestinian territories, the demolition of houses, and the arbitrary arrests all furnish eloquent proof of the impediments to the peace process.

The new conflagration in that part of the world requires the international community to redouble its vigilance so as to ensure the peoples of the subregion the right to peaceful coexistence, for which one of the prerequisites is respect for the right of the Palestinians to a free and independent State.

Along the same lines, the occupation of part of Lebanese national territory by foreign troops is a serious threat that every day delays the national reconciliation of a long-suffering people that continues to seek stability.

From East to West, from North to South, other conflicts with various motivations continue to rage and pose serious threats to international peace and security.

While it is true that it has been possible to find the beginnings of solutions thanks to the perseverance of our Organization, it remains no less true that other solutions which have been advocated have proved of limited value.

The pictures of desolation, exposing the sufferings endured by countries subject to economic embargoes, lead us to question the effectiveness of a solution that first and foremost punishes vulnerable and innocent populations.

Africa unfortunately has not been spared the cycle of violence, despite the resolution of certain conflicts that had long plunged this continent into fratricidal wars. Other hotbeds of tension remain, and Africa therefore continues to be at the forefront of the international community's concerns. In the Great Lakes region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Somalia continue to be theatres for bloody and tragic events.

Faced with all these situations of crisis and conflict, my Government unreservedly supports the initiatives underway to achieve negotiated settlements.

As for Sierra Leone, the Comorian Republic most firmly condemns the violent coup against the leaders of Sierra Leone, whom the people of that country — wishing to break with the practices of a bygone age — legally and democratically chose.

As two sides of the same coin, at the international level, political and economic situations remain closely linked. Thus this gloomy view of the international political landscape is made even darker by the disheartening international economic environment.

Despite the priorities and objectives set forth by the new development strategies, we are obliged to note that

the results are less than expected. But we venture to hope that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, which recently became a supplement to the New Agenda, will provide the impetus to speed up Africa's integration into the international system of trade. Under this system, small States continue to experience reduced prices for their raw materials, and their burden of debt is becoming ever more unbearable.

The Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, a small island State and one of the least developed States, shares the plight of those who are excluded from the international market. For, in addition to limited natural resources and the high cost of international transportation, it suffers from other political and structural restraints, which are slowing down its socio-economic development.

Given the virtually chronic instability that has characterized the recent history of the Comoros, the Comorian people are obliged to ask whether they have the right to peace and the right to life.

The Comorian people remain convinced that the search for a just and lasting solution enabling it to embark on a path of harmonious socio-economic development necessarily hinges on a final settlement to the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte, which is under French administration. I reserve the right to speak on this subject during the debate. For there can be no doubt that the present events in my country are a corollary to the incomplete decolonization and to the socio-economic crisis from which the Comorian people have suffered.

In conclusion, I associate myself with previous speakers in extending to the brotherly and friendly Government and people of Indonesia condolences on the crash of the aircraft that claimed so many lives, as well as our profound grief at the disaster that their country has suffered as a result of the fires that are devastating their forests.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ohn Gyaw, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Gyaw (Myanmar): Allow me to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his unanimous election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His outstanding diplomatic skills and long experience in foreign affairs assure us that he will lead our deliberations at the present session to a successful conclusion.

May I also pay our tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia for his sagacious and exemplary stewardship of the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

I also wish to extend our warm congratulations to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his assumption of his high office. The new Secretary-General has already proved his dynamism and dedication in the discharge of his responsibilities — not the least by providing us with his comprehensive United Nations reform programme for our consideration at this session of the General Assembly.

This is a time for change and renewal for the United Nations. The reform package, proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", is the most comprehensive proposal on the reform of the United Nations in the 52-year history of the Organization. Specific proposals, contained therein, need to be most carefully studied, and considered by all of us. Another question of reform which is the subject of intensive consultations and discussions among Member States at present is that of the composition and working methods of the Security Council.

Both the reform of the United Nations and that of the Security Council are imperatives of our times. These institutions and their working methods need to be changed and adjusted appropriately to reflect the present-day realities. With regard to the reform of the United Nations in general, we believe that there is a need for a thorough review of the United Nations Charter. Many profound changes have taken place in the world since the Charter was framed 52 years ago. We are of the view that the role of the General Assembly should be enhanced in line with Articles 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the Charter. The practice whereby a few great Powers hijack important political issues for settlement among themselves in the Security Council, bypassing the Assembly is not basically consistent with the spirit and principles of the Charter. Nor is it in the interest of the entire membership of the United Nations and the interest of the Organization. The General Assembly should be more actively involved in the settlement of important political issues before the United Nations. We wish to see more intimate and dynamic cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Moreover, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should play a greater role in the coordination and direction of global macroeconomic policy matters.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, there is an emerging convergence of views among Member States that the membership of the Council should be expanded to reflect the present-day realities, although differences of opinion still exist on the modalities of enlarging the Council. Myanmar endorses the position of the non-aligned countries that the Council should be enlarged by not less than 11 new members and that such an enlargement should be based on the principles of sovereign equality of States, equitable geographical distribution and rotation. Imbalance in the composition of the Security Council and gross under-representation in it of the non-aligned countries should be corrected in order to reflect the universal character of the world Organization. In the category of permanent members, there are a few interesting proposals, including that of Mr. Razali Ismail, President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, recommending an increase of five new permanent members, two industrialized States and one State each from regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively. There are also proposals to rotate the three new regional permanent seats. These proposals deserve our serious consideration. We believe that there is also a need for democratization and greater transparency in the working methods of the Council.

May I now touch briefly on the reform package, proposed by the Secretary-General. We welcome the main thrust of his proposals for cost-cutting and streamlining of the United Nations institutions and services. The important thing is that the reform of the United Nations should truly benefit the entire membership, of which the majority are developing countries. Our vision is a leaner and more efficient United Nations that can more effectively respond to the challenges of our time and better serve the interests of the entire membership of the Organization. In this respect, we need to examine most carefully whether the new senior executive posts it is proposed to create are really necessary and whether emphasis and focus on institutional reforms are rightly placed.

These proposed reforms, if and when approved by the General Assembly and implemented, will have far-reaching effects on the Organization and will go a long way in determining how well the United Nations will be equipped to meet new challenges in the twenty-first century. Accordingly, we should not rush into reform measures for their own sake, showing undue haste. We should undertake a most careful examination and a thorough discussion of these proposals before taking firm decisions in this regard.

Myanmar is an ardent advocate of stepping up international disarmament efforts with a view to making further advances in this important area of our collective endeavour. We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General in his reform package to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament Affairs to the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation.

Today, the post-cold-war international political climate is conducive to arms limitations and disarmament. Last year, the General Assembly successfully adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are encouraged to learn that the Preparatory Commission for the Organization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is making good progress. However, it was disconcerting to learn of the recent subcritical non-explosive nuclear tests carried out by a nuclear-weapon State. Such subcritical tests run counter to the spirit of the CTBT and to the cause of nuclear disarmament. We wish to see the cessation of all weapon-related nuclear tests — be they explosive or non-explosive, subcritical or supracritical — in all environments for all time.

In the field of arms limitations and disarmament, we attach the highest importance to nuclear disarmament and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. At the historic golden jubilee session of the United Nations General Assembly, Myanmar submitted, with the overwhelming support of Member States, the draft resolution that became resolution 50/70 P, entitled "Nuclear disarmament", calling upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake a phased programme of progressive and balanced deep reductions of nuclear weapons with a view to the total elimination of these weapons within a time-bound framework and calling upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee to commence multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

Since the adoption of resolution 50/70 P by the General Assembly in 1995, there has been a ground swell of renewed interest in and support for nuclear disarmament worldwide. In their advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, all Judges of the International Court of Justice unanimously reaffirmed the existence of a legal obligation for all States, including nuclear-weapon States, to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. There has also been a clamour for nuclear disarmament by several groups of experts, groups of ex-military officials from

some nuclear-weapon States and public organizations in various countries around the world.

At the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, my delegation once again successfully submitted a follow-up resolution — resolution 51/45 O — on the same subject. My delegation will submit another follow-up draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at this year's session as well. We hope that, in view of its immense political importance, our draft resolution will enjoy the overwhelming support of Member States, as in previous years.

The recent Conference held in Oslo from 1 to 19 September negotiated a draft convention to place a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. We are supportive of banning the export and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. We believe, however, that every country is entitled to exercise the right of self-defence, enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, in matters of its national defence. In our view, the real problem lies in the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines and the export and trade in these weapons. It is the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines that is actually killing and maiming innocent children, women and men the world over, and it is the export and trade in these mines that is causing their proliferation, leading to their indiscriminate use. We should effectively address these real issues, rather than reach out for an indiscriminate and all-encompassing total ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Next year, 1998, will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Significant and substantial advances have been achieved by the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights in the past 50 years. Nowadays, increasing importance and emphasis have been placed on the promotion and protection of human rights.

We are all for the promotion and protection of basic human rights, including the right to development. There is no question about that. But when it comes to the application of human rights standards, we are concerned by the deviation by certain Western countries from the criteria of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity enshrined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights. The politicization of human rights questions and the selectivity and use of double standards run counter to the spirit and basic norms of human rights.

Myanmar has been unfairly treated in this matter and has been singled out for censure by certain Western countries under the guise of the promotion and protection of human rights. The fact is that never in our post-independence history have we in Myanmar enjoyed such economic growth; never have the Myanmar people better enjoyed the basic human rights to peace and stability, shelter, clothing and food than at present. Those Western countries turn a blind eye to all these positive developments and accomplishments of the Government in my country and indulge in the ritual of unfounded fabricated charges against my country. To cite a Myanmar saying, their ignorance of the realities and misjudgment may be likened to that of a quack doctor who ignores the fact that the patient is a man and gives him a gynaecological diagnosis. A man must not be accused or censured for the offences he has not committed.

For our part, we have cooperated with the United Nations to the fullest extent possible. Myanmar has been engaged in a continuing dialogue with the United Nations. From 1994 onwards, I myself, as a representative of the Myanmar Government, have held discussions with the Secretary-General and his representatives at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Alvaro de Soto, representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has visited Myanmar several times and has met and held discussions with officials of the Government. There have also been several visits by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights. Moreover, the Myanmar Government has fully responded to queries on human rights situations and provided the full and comprehensive information sought by the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies. We shall continue this cooperation with the United Nations.

The spread of narcotic drugs is a growing international concern. Myanmar has always been in the forefront of the war on illicit drugs. A few facts and figures will speak for themselves.

In the military operations from 1988 to the end of August 1997 by the Myanmar Armed forces to interdict drug traffickers, 776 members of the Armed Forces, including 25 commissioned officers, sacrificed their lives; and 2351 members, including 84 commissioned officers, sustained injuries.

From 1989 to date, operations to destroy narcotic drugs have been carried out 11 times in Yangon;

operations to destroy narcotic drugs, drug refineries and poppy plantations have been carried out 18 times by the local populace in frontier areas; a total of 36,682.03 acres of poppy plantations have been destroyed. All these operations took place in the presence of foreign journalists and diplomats.

Myanmar has a comprehensive legal framework to combat drug abuse, including money laundering. Under the 1993 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, money laundering and the acquisition of property by the illegal means of drug trafficking are strictly prohibited. Stern punitive measures for such criminal offences are prescribed and a separate body — the Property Examination Committee — was constituted effectively to deal with these offences.

Myanmar's cooperation with other countries in mutual legal assistance in the suppression of narcotic drugs is exemplified by the handing-over of the drug trafficker Mr. Li Yun Ching by the Myanmar authorities to the Thai authorities on 17 May 1997 during the goodwill visit of Thai Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to Myanmar.

A most significant accomplishment by Myanmar in recent times in this respect is the declaration of Mong-la Special Zone (4) of the Eastern Shan State as a "drug-free zone" as of 22 April 1997. Special Zone (2) of the Eastern Shan State and Special Zones (1) and (2) in Kachin State have been designated for establishment as "drug-free zones". Effective measures are being implemented to totally eradicate drug abuse in these areas. We are confident that these areas will be totally drug free in the near future. By establishing an increasing number of such drug-free zones and by other effective measures of suppression of narcotic drugs, we envision and strive to achieve the total eradication of drug abuse in Myanmar in the not-too-distant future.

In fairness to all, it would be hard to find other countries that have made sacrifices of such magnitude in terms of loss of life and limb of the members of their armed forces and have carried out such massive destruction of narcotic drugs. No candid observer, free from any prejudice against Myanmar, can deny these concrete facts. But certain Westerners, bearing prejudice and malice against Myanmar, are pointing accusing fingers at my country on all sorts of fabricated charges. Nothing can be further from the truth. So glaring is their distortion of facts that we can only say that the analogy of the quack doctor I have quoted above also applies in this instance.

As this is a time for change and renewal for the United Nations, so it is for the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In this year of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Association, ASEAN, at its ministerial meeting in Kuala Lumpur in July this year, admitted Laos and Myanmar, bringing its membership to nine. By so doing, ASEAN has demonstrated to the world the solidarity among the South-East Asian countries. We are confident that this will lead to the further expansion of the membership of the Association to 10 in the near future. By this expansion, ASEAN has once again proven its relevance, viability and dynamism as a regional organization.

Myanmar is also taking an active part in regional economic cooperation. An important step taken by my country recently is Myanmar's joining of the Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIST-EC) in August this year.

Through its pursuit of an independent and active foreign policy, Myanmar has consistently contributed to peace and stability in the region and beyond. As a member of ASEAN and of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar will continue this contribution through its active participation in international and regional affairs in future as well.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Cem.

Mr. Cem (Turkey): It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I am confident that under his able leadership, the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will be a success. I should also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for the way in which he presided over the General Assembly during its previous session. I also express my warm congratulations to His Excellency Kofi Annan on his election to the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The relative euphoria created by the end of the cold war is being replaced by a sense of realism. Although the possibility of a global confrontation has been considerably reduced, ensuring security and preserving stability continue to be a major concern for the international community. We are witnessing the eruption of conflicts and serious tensions of a regional character as well as within individual States.

Critical disparities in economic and social conditions exist around the globe. Large segments of the world's population live in conditions of dire poverty. Achieving sustainable development remains a great challenge for the world community. On the other hand, the contemporary values we share, such as democracy, pluralism, tolerance, human rights and gender equality, require constant attention and effort.

Against this backdrop, international and regional organizations and, in particular, the United Nations, are in the process of redefining their role and functions in order to cope with new realities and challenges. The discussions and recent efforts to reform the United Nations have produced creative recommendations. Here, I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report. The far-reaching and substantive reform programme proposed therein satisfies our expectations. We strongly support the reform programme. On the other hand, we also share the serious concerns of the Secretary-General with regard to the need to put the Organization on a sound financial basis.

We commend the Secretary-General for attaching the highest priority to the goals of alleviating poverty and enhancing development. This is indispensable for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security, both within and among nations. In this context, we appreciate the approach taken by the Secretary-General that the envisaged coordination of the Development Group must be done so as not to weaken in any way the authority and independence of the institutions in question, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in particular.

Making human rights an integral part of all relevant United Nations operations is also a commendable goal. We are pleased to see an eminent personality at the head of United Nations activities in the human rights field. The fiftieth anniversary, in 1998, of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will provide the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to promote human rights all over the world.

Elevating the standard of human rights to its highest level is the foremost duty and obligation of each State towards its own people. I should like to draw attention to the human rights problems and to the discrimination faced in particular by migrant workers and their families in some developed countries. The protection and promotion of their human, economic, social, cultural and political rights are matters of major concern in the human rights field.

In this respect, Turkey supports the idea of a world conference on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It would be a milestone in the decades-long struggle waged by the United Nations against racism and racial discrimination.

Turkey also supports the efforts envisaged in the reform programme to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations to deal with transnational organized crime, narcotics and terrorism. One of the most important threats our world faces today is problems related to drug abuse. The special session of the United Nations to be held next year will enable us to chart the way for the new measures that must be taken in view of the threat posed by drug trafficking.

The scourge of our age, no doubt, is terrorism. It is a threat to human rights and democratic institutions. It violates the most fundamental of all human rights: the right to life. It does not recognize boundaries. International cooperation is imperative in the fight against terrorism, and countries that refrain from participating in this cooperation must be condemned by the international community. We believe that the time has come to draft a global treaty on combating terrorism. In the same vein, we think that terrorist crimes should be included within the competence of the international criminal court that is to be established.

The Secretary-General has proposed significant measures that bring the arms-control agenda to the forefront of multilateral cooperation. Renewed emphasis should be placed on the work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, with a view to ending production of fissile material for weapons purposes.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should become an effective tool for monitoring arms transfers. Likewise, the international community should exert vigorous efforts to end illicit arms trafficking as a key element in the international struggle against terrorism.

Peacekeeping stands out as one of the most significant undertakings of the United Nations. The development of the peacekeeping capability of the United Nations remains a pressing need, and one that Turkey supports wholeheartedly. Turkey has taken part, and continues to participate, in several peacekeeping operations.

The ongoing work aimed at improving the representative character of the Security Council, increasing the Council's effectiveness and efficiency and adapting it to current realities of the international community is of particular importance. Reform of the Security Council constitutes the most serious attempt in years to enhance the role and moral authority not only of the Council, but also of the United Nations as a world organization.

We have to ensure that the envisaged enlargement and future composition of the Security Council will correspond to the expectations of the largest possible segment of the United Nations membership. The reform process has to take into consideration the fundamental changes which have taken place on the international scene and recognize the ability and readiness of a group of States to assume a greater and more effective role. These States should be given the opportunity to serve on the Security Council more frequently and on a more regular basis. Security Council reform is too important to be tied to the settlement of other issues; it must satisfy the general membership and enhance the role and authority of the Organization.

Located at the crossroads of three continents and several regions, including the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean and Central Asia, Turkey stands ready to play an even greater role in the maintenance of peace, security and stability in its wider region. Today, the historical and cultural attributes of this vast geography, more than ever, find expression in Turkey's foreign policy in terms of hopes and opportunities.

A return to normalcy in Iraq and its reintegration with the international community are of vital importance for all countries of the region. Turkey supports the preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. Turkey has been fully complying with the United Nations sanctions regime imposed on Iraq. On the other hand, it is a fact that the sanctions have also produced totally unforeseen and negative effects on the economies of third countries as well as on the economy of Iraq. Turkey stands at the forefront of those countries which have been directly and most adversely affected by the sanctions regime. This unacceptable situation reminds us of the very pertinent remark of the former Secretary-General that

> "Sanctions are a measure taken collectively by the United Nations to maintain or restore international peace and security. The costs involved ... should be borne ... by all Member States and not exclusively by the few who have the misfortune to be neighbours or major economic partners of the target country." [*A/50/60, para. 73*]

We expect the Security Council to expeditiously consider Turkey's application to the sanctions committee, and to take appropriate action.

The Middle East peace process has been the single most important positive development in that fragile region in the recent past. However, events have recently taken, rather unexpectedly, an unfortunate and dangerous turn. Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories, carried out despite the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and despite the provisions of the peace accords, and abhorrent terrorist activities by the enemies of peace have placed the peace process under a very severe strain. We urge the parties to do their utmost to establish mutual trust, without which it will be impossible to attain the objectives of the peace process.

Afghanistan is another conflict area where the international community has so far been unable to help bring about a just and lasting solution. At present, even the national unity of the Afghan people is at stake. It is most unfortunate that the warring factions have been fervently pursuing the military option. Regrettably, one of the major obstacles to convincing the factions that a military solution is unattainable is the continuing supply of weapons, equipment and ammunition, along with military involvement from outside.

My country has close historical ties with Afghanistan and the Afghan people. We feel very strongly about the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. Taking this opportunity, I wish to reiterate Turkey's readiness to host, in cooperation with the United Nations, an intra-Afghan meeting if and when all the parties are ready to participate.

Turkey attaches particular importance to bringing its historical, close relations of friendship and cooperation with Balkan countries to the highest level. We support the multilateral initiatives aimed at securing peace, stability and cooperation in South-East Europe. Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be a focus of the international community. The preservation of the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a continuing responsibility undertaken by the United Nations. The full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement has not yet been secured. While the Federation has been working hard to implement the

Peace Agreement, other quarters have been obstructing the whole process. The successful effort in July on the part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) to apprehend and bring before the Tribunal war crimes suspects who remain at large was a commendable move. In order to achieve reconciliation and ensure peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is essential to prove that crimes committed will not go unpunished. The return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes constitutes another essential element for achieving lasting peace and stability in the country.

SFOR, to which my country is a troop contributor, has played a significant role in Bosnia for the maintenance of peace and order since the signing of the Peace Agreement. We believe that the continued presence of an international force in the area is crucial for durable peace.

Albania and its people have passed through very difficult times. Ensuring internal peace and stability in Albania was a prerequisite for the preservation of peace and stability in the whole region. The multinational protection force, in which, again, my country took part, succeeded in restoring stability and order in the country. It was thus possible for the Albanian people to hold the parliamentary elections that paved the way for the resolution of the crisis.

However, Albania still faces a difficult road on the way to full administrative, social and economic recovery. The need for concerted international support remains. Sharing close historical and cultural ties with the Albanian people, Turkey will continue to be of support to Albania.

In our relations with Greece, our principal objective is to promptly tackle, through a substantive and result-oriented dialogue, the issues, mostly related to the Aegean, that still stand between our two countries. To this end, we have made several appeals to Greece to agree to a dialogue and to begin a process with a view to settling our differences.

We do not rule out any agreed method of peaceful settlement of our differences. Furthermore, we have unilaterally implemented a number of confidence-building measures in the hope that they would be reciprocated. We expect that the group of "Wisemen", consisting of two non-governmental personalities from Turkey and Greece, respectively, will be able to finally meet without further delay. This group has the task of preparing a report to be submitted to both Governments with non-binding recommendations for dealing with the issues.

We also eagerly await the translation into concrete deeds, to promote better relations between our two countries, of the understanding reached during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Madrid last July. Delaying this process by linking it to pre-conditions or artificial issues will not serve the interests of either country.

It is evident that our bilateral problems cannot be resolved by the effort of Turkey alone, and that mutual commitment and the display of goodwill by both parties are imperative.

The Caucasus, as a gateway between East and West, attracts world-wide attention politically and economically. We attach the highest significance to peace and stability, as well as to the preservation and consolidation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of that neighbouring region. In this context, it is vitally important to bring about a just and lasting solution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the basis of international law. The Nagorny-Karabakh dispute still stands out as the principal obstacle to peace, security and enhanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region, since more than one fifth of Azeri territory remains under occupation. We urge that the Minsk process and the decisions reached in that process will be taken seriously by all parties and that they will be implemented.

The efforts made within this context by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)/Minsk Group should be carefully considered by all parties concerned. As a member of the Group, Turkey will continue to contribute to these efforts.

We welcome the recent August meeting in Tbilisi between the parties to the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and the signing of a statement by the leaders on the peaceful and mutually acceptable solution to the conflict. In this regard, I would like to stress that Turkey is committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders as stated in the Lisbon document of the OSCE.

The Cyprus question has been on the agenda of the Security Council for almost 34 years. This roughly corresponds to the presence of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in the island. It may be high time to find a real answer to why a solution has eluded us all this time in spite of the dramatic changes that have occurred both on the international

scene and in Cyprus, and despite all the commendable efforts of successive United Nations Secretaries-General.

After so many years it would be wrong, I believe, to continue to link a 34-year-old failure to the lack of political will or to the intransigence of one side or the other. We should ask ourselves where we failed, why the mistrust is still so deep in the island and whether we have made the right diagnosis of this problem.

There are two distinct peoples, two separate administrations and two democracies on the island. Along with these realities, bicommunality, bizonality and the maintenance of the 1960 system of guarantees should be considered as incontestable foundations for a settlement. It is obvious that reluctance to recognize the realities in the island, and the tendency to apply pressure to one side alone, have not led us to a negotiated solution. The last two rounds of talks, in Troutbeck and in Glion, have solidified this perception. We do believe that the lessons of the past and current developments on the international scene should compel us to adopt a realistic approach to the Cypriot issue. The establishment of an equilibrium between the legal and political status of the two sides to the dispute could be a starting point for a rethinking process.

Time is of the essence in initiating such a process since one can foresee that in early 1998 a chain of events might hinder efforts to find a negotiated settlement, and further increase the tension both on the island and in the region. As witnessed in the recent face-to-face talks, the pursuit of European Union membership by the Greek Cypriot side has become the main impediment to progress, rendering the negotiating process increasingly meaningless and an agreed settlement even more elusive. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side firmly believe that efforts to carry forward this process will cast a shadow on the talks and might destroy the very foundation of the negotiation process.

On various occasions, we have made our position clear on the issue of European Union membership of Cyprus. The 1959 and 1960 Treaties on Cyprus established an internal institutional balance between the two communities of Cyprus and, simultaneously, an external balance of interests between Turkey and Greece in their relationship with Cyprus. These Treaties unequivocally preclude the membership of Cyprus in any international organization, or political or economic union in which both Turkey and Greece are not members. Therefore, from a legal point of view, Cyprus can join the European Union only after a solution and simultaneously with Turkey. From a political point of view, this also appears to be the only viable outcome. We continue to entertain the hope that those who are concerned will act with an awareness of their historical responsibility, as the time approaches toward a decision on an issue which will have a determining effect on the future course of events in Cyprus.

The deployment of S-300 missiles to southern Cyprus is another gloomy prospect. Coupled with ambitious rearmament efforts that the Greek Cypriot side has embarked upon, the purchase of highly sophisticated missiles aims at jeopardizing the security of the Turkish Cypriot people and of Turkey. We sincerely hope that in the end wisdom will prevail and this project, which may seriously affect peace and stability in the entire region, will be discontinued.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, in his statement earlier this afternoon, referred in a misleading way to my country and to the Cyprus issue. My delegation will speak in exercise of its right of reply at a later stage in response to the allegations contained in that statement.

The challenges of building and preserving peace and of achieving development are closely linked. The United Nations, having successfully ended the first 50 years of its existence, is today well poised to take up these tasks. It is up to each Member State to make the best effort to contribute to this process. Turkey is determined to do its share. We sincerely hope that this session of the General Assembly will mark one more important step towards the realization of regional and global peace, stability, security, cooperation, solidarity and prosperity on the eve of a new millennium.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Alberto Arias, and I now call on him.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The tragedy of the millions of human beings who are suffering the ravages of poverty affects Panama very deeply. This is a deplorable scourge which has reached intolerable levels. Those of us present here are facing the shameful paradox of having produced the highest level of wealth ever known to mankind while at the same time having the highest level of unemployment in our economies in history.

Poverty and exclusion are the battlefronts that call for political and moral will. From this standpoint, Panama is concerned that the tenor of this debate on the financial or military attributes of the many aspirants to membership of the Security Council may make us forget why the Organization was created.

Panama, a founding Member of the United Nations, signed the Charter of the United Nations to give a voice to those who had been silenced by colonialism and to those who clamoured for justice, freedom and development; to restore dignity to peoples such as mine that had been deprived of their sovereign rights; and to give those who had been discriminated against and persecuted the right to dream about a better world in which no one would be hated for the color of his skin or his beliefs, or for being part of a given ethnic group, or of one gender or the other.

Panama signed that beautiful document, a tribute to the humble of the Earth, in order to give democratic institutions, civil and political rights and multilateral forums to all those people — men and women of good will — who did not want war to return, destroying their homes, legacies, cities and towns and plots of land. They also did not want to see war rub out entire generations by sacrificing them to obsession, fanaticism and extremism.

Like many others here, Panama signed the San Francisco Charter so that the poor of the world and those suffering from disease and malnutrition would have two of the simplest and most moving of human attributes: faith and hope.

The more than 50 years that have passed since then have brought about considerable advances that have changed the face of the world. Many of them would not have been possible, however, if cooperation had not imprinted a new meaning and purpose on our Organization. In fact, few vestiges of colonialism remain to be solved; ethnic groups and nationalities, prohibited cultures and the prosecuted now work together in pride to design a polychromatic world that calls for equality in difference and tolerance towards diversity.

The number of nations which are Members of the United Nations has increased three-fold, and its agenda reflects their pain, suffering, struggles and aspirations. Its orientation and contents have changed, and everyone has been given a forum in which to express his opinions and find support and understanding.

Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If a planning board had tried to identify, as is now proposed, which problem had priority and deserved attention, financing and debate, the Security Council would never have met in my country, Panama, nor would that event have changed so decisively the course of negotiations when Panama attempted to regain its sovereignty and its Canal.

There are important achievements in the daily life of the United Nations. However, none of them would have been possible if the United Nations had not attained the quality, the representative nature and the legitimacy that it has achieved through universality. It must be recognized that there remain unacceptably acute differences and deficiencies, which are becoming more serious and are constantly and forcibly knocking at the very doors of our homes.

At the same time, thousands of people are dying before our very eyes because of hunger, intolerance, hatred, terrorism, fratricidal warfare, authoritarianism and violence; thousands of children are looking at us through television screens with languid and sad eyes, only to become mere statistics at the end of the programme. There are still those who peddle illusions, who would have us believe that conflicts reside at the end of a rifle and that they can be resolved by having more powerful rifles. The figures on what the world spends on weapons are so disproportionate when compared to expenditures for development that only mentioning them makes us ashamed.

We should have already learned the lesson that when people are motivated, for whatever reason, there is no bullet or defence system, no matter how sophisticated, that can eliminate the causes of conflict; that the instruments of force can lower the fever but they cannot eliminate the turmoil which causes it; and that there is no military solution to social and political problems. History, life's teacher, shows us that violence usually is the result, not the cause, of conflict; that war is more often than not the symptom rather than the cause of the ills; and that the only way to resolve conflicts and the violence that goes along with them is to act on their true, underlying causes: hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty and the lack of means to overcome them; ethnic, gender and cultural discrimination; intolerance and authoritarianism; fundamentalism and political and religious persecution; unemployment, slave labour and immoral salaries;

humiliation and national oppression. The majority of us who came here over 50 years ago, as well as the many who arrived later, did so in order to find solidarity and to take refuge in the realm of law, not to shield ourselves in a new military alliance or to take shelter in the shadow of a cannon. Circumstances then forced us to live under an ominous nuclear balance which made the interrelations of military forces the determining factor in international relations.

Today — under a completely different setting in which the balance of power is measured in terms of the potential and economic strength of markets — nothing compels us to continue to live under the model of the cold war.

The greatest impending threat to international peace and security is poverty, whose reach is as extensive as that of the most pervasive of plagues. Which current or future Security Council member's army will be able to put an end to the threat if it is the mother of all illnesses and resentments and harvests more human lives than any bacteria, virus or ancient or modern plague?

If what we are contemplating is a resurgence of the old and festering conflicts which were frozen by the cold war, would we not be substituting the ancient balance of bipolar nuclear terror for a new and expanded military alliance to resolve those conflicts under the umbrella of the United Nations?

Panama certainly does not believe that force is not necessary as a deterrent, nor are we unaware that such a tool in responsible hands is useful, particularly when it is legitimated by world-wide consensus, as the Charter proposes.

What concerns us is that most of the discussion in the world about the reform of the United Nations disproportionately stresses the use of force and disregards what is important, and indeed imperative — that is to say, cooperation for development.

Hence, to assert that the most important function of the United Nations is to have a big force to maintain international peace and security, while at the same time proposing the reduction, streamlining and elimination of the Organization's social and humanitarian components, raises important questions about the final nature of our reform and modernization exercise.

To maintain that financial and material contributions to peacekeeping operations should be decisive in determining who can and who cannot sit on the Council, while at the same time stating that social and humanitarian tasks, development programmes and environmental protection programmes should be placed in other kinds of management and organization categories, greatly concerns us. This compendium of proposals must be rebalanced and given its proper dimension.

If what we are going to discuss is the package, then the only one we should talk about is the package of the fundamental principles of the United Nations already enshrined in the Charter.

From that integral perspective, the purpose of politically and financially strengthening the Organization, and the Security Council in particular, is to ensure that it can fully discharge its major mission: the promotion of social and economic and human development as the most effective way to prevent conflicts.

The profound developments in the last 50 years have changed the international community. The deepest change has occurred in the parameters of, and the language used to define, relations among countries. The Powers of the past no longer exist, and new Powers are emerging — even though there are obvious military weaknesses.

It is no longer war that marks the trend towards contemporary development or the course or content of international life. Why organize the United Nations on the basis of what no longer exists? Now it is peace, trade, the sharing of the fruits of knowledge and technology, and the deep changes designed to ensure higher levels of tolerance and open-mindedness that are features of international coexistence. It is not military tools to prevent war that have to be strengthened but, rather, the tools to build peace, to achieve international cooperation, as is stated in the Charter, in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all (Article 3). International peace is not guaranteed by rifles or cannons, or by one or several allied Powers. This has been proved by recent, and not so recent but no less painful, experiences.

The small and brave country Uruguay, which makes the highest per capita contribution for peace-keeping, has taught us such a good lesson in this respect.

If it is true that the greatest restriction on creativity, thought and intelligence is dialectically established by language itself, then we have to cast aside once and for all the language and the thinking process left over from the cold war. We must design something that more appropriately represents what we wish to do.

Panama does not feel that its juridical status has been diminished when it acknowledges that some countries have special attributes or can better discharge the tasks of the Security Council. On the one hand, the problem is to define these tasks, to determine whether what we want is a guardian or a promoter of development and cooperation. On the other hand, the problem relates to the degree of responsibility a member of the Council has *vis-a-vis* the rest of us. For, if its membership of the Council is based solely on its individual attributes — rejecting any kind of representation of us — then it can sit in that seat in the Council until someone simply wrests the seat from it by violence.

Everything indicates that we should define these tasks in a coherent manner in keeping with the whole set of purposes of the United Nations. From this standpoint, each region has to determine the degree of representativity and responsibility that its members should have, as well as who can occupy those seats. It is difficult to think that after the Members of the United Nations have acquired such long and productive experience of working in regional groups and organizations, everything would be discarded in order to vote for a country on an individual basis. We would like to know what benefit there would be in reigning in a vacuum.

Furthermore, neither ideological nor military blocs appear any longer on the map of the world, nor should geographical distribution alone. These have been nothing but obsolete instruments which have served to draw simplistic and arbitrary borders and, hence, to face us at times with tragedies.

This new international reality must be fully recognized. The new borders that are now forming are trade, ethnic, religious, and cultural borders, and it is precisely because they were disregarded during the cold war that we are still faced today with all these upheavals. It is those upheavals that seduce even the most conservative among us into being guided by one of the left-over thoughts of the bipolar world — *vis pacem para bellum*.

On the other hand, if we really feel comfortable with one-third of the membership not rotating and two-thirds of the membership rotating, then it would be sane and judicious for any expansion to maintain those proportions, which practice has shown to be efficient and which have been agreed to.

Why, then, should we go on using language that draws a distinction between the regular budget and the peacekeeping budget? This accounting dichotomy became a policy and crudely revealed how individual interests could separate the package from the founding principles, to such an extent that they would be truly contradictory. There are those who say that it is shameful for the regular budget to have to be financed out of the peacekeeping budget. I would say that it is even more shameful that the disproportion in amounts, both in payments and in voluntary contributions, is so overwhelming that the social and humanitarian functions are now secondary to the security functions, as if, in the final analysis, civic-action programmes are dependent upon military operations. This reflects the unstated reversal of focus between the secondary: the operations for the maintenance of security, and the primary: the human-development programmes.

A single budget, which conforms to a periodically agreed-upon political strategy, should respond in each case to the changing challenges of the new international dynamism. In our view, it is not compatible with the new spirit of democratization in our Organization or with the new international realities for one or a few countries to subsidize the entire budget in a disproportionate way, for this can lead to the danger of concentrating the decision-making power and thereby affecting the Organization's functioning.

In the final analysis — and we do not want to give lessons to anyone — we feel that what is necessary is a good arsenal of general and flexible criteria, the key to the search for consensus — that is, representativity, legitimacy, non-discrimination, equity and legal equality. We must move from the particular and discuss individual aspirations, in order to design a compendium of criteria that would be applicable to all, whether or not their seats on the Security Council rotated.

From that standpoint, we think that we should not discuss the veto in the abstract, as a privilege or as a category in and of itself. With the passage of time, there has been a distortion in the original spirit of the Charter, under which the members of the Security Council were to represent in the Security Council the general interests

of the international community, not act in accordance with their exclusive military or political strategic interests.

In that context, part of the reform should be the negotiation of an agreement restricting the use of the veto to what is stipulated in Chapter VII and to what was agreed in the gentlemen's agreement in London 1948.

From that standpoint, we need a formula that can prevent a single country from standing in the way of the general interest. One such formula would be allowing vetoes to be overridden by a two-thirds majority. The optimal solution, of course, would be to get rid of the veto.

Let me here and now thank the public and private sectors of the international community for the support and solidarity given to my country during the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal.

This is a good opportunity to report that Panama is continuing to take the necessary legislative and administrative steps to turn this international public service over to an agency that would be constitutionally autonomous — administratively, politically and financially. Panama is certain that scrupulous observance of this autonomous status will make the interocean waterway more competitive and more efficient and will also allow the agency to take advantage of the many opportunities that will be created by the Canal's upcoming incorporation into the Panamanian economy.

We must remember that until now military needs for the Canal have always been dominant, and this has made it impossible to exploit the Canal's many competitive advantages for trade and international civil-maritime activities. From this standpoint, Panama's greatest strategic concern during the transition process has been to gain complete control of the Canal so as to undertake a vast, multimillion-dollar programme to modernize and widen it. This programme includes widening the Gaillard Cut — a critical area for ships crossing from the waters of Lake Gatun — as well as the systematic studies undertaken in cooperation with the United States, Japan and the European Union in order to construct the third system of locks, which will allow passage of ships weighing up to 150,000 dead-weight tons.

Given the international importance of the Panamanian interoceanic waterway, we intend to announce formally to this General Assembly session that, in order to ensure respect for the neutrality of the Panama Canal, Panama will conduct its external relations in such a way as to reduce international tension and conflict and not to get embroiled in issues that would require us to take sides for or against members of the international community with which we have friendly relations, or for or against the community as a whole. We are convinced that this new policy is the most important contribution Panama can make to international peace and security.

From this standpoint, we will concentrate our efforts on contributing to understanding, cooperation and friendly relations among peoples and governments. The Panama Canal, as an international public service, must be open to all users, public and private, regardless of the flag they fly or the economic system they represent.

In this regard, we are pleased by our admission to the pro tem secretariat of the Rio Group as of 1998, and we are committed from now on to undertaking intensive diplomatic efforts to strengthen the Group's role as a leading forum for interregional and intra-regional discussion and political understanding.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency, Mr. Jadranko Prlic.

Mr. Prlic (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I am particularly honoured to have the opportunity to address the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like, first, to extend my warm congratulations to our respected friend and colleague, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on his accession to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Mr. Udovenko's rich experience and extensive knowledge of United Nations affairs are telling proof that this General Assembly session has outstanding leadership.

The destiny of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been closely linked to the United Nations since early 1992, when my country became a Member State. Bosnia and Herzegovina's struggle to survive as a sovereign state within its internationally recognized borders lasted four years. We believe we won the major battle in preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country, but we know we still have a long way to go.

The role of the international community and the involvement of the United Nations in the Bosnia and Herzegovina crisis were overwhelming. Month after

month, the United Nations, led by the Security Council, stood firmly behind internationally accepted norms and principles in order to make possible a negotiated and peaceful solution in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unfortunately — for subjective and objective reasons, most of which are well known to all of us — in spite of all the resolutions and decisions the tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to take what was probably the heaviest toll of any modern conflict.

The events also proved that the United Nations was not ready to deal effectively with what was certainly one of the most complex crisis in our times. The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, and still is, an important case study which should be carefully analysed in the context of the United Nations involvement mandate and its role in crisis situations.

But we respect the help and tireless efforts of the members of the United Nations mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help the civilian population survive. I would like to use this opportunity to say that we remember and greatly admire the members of the international community who lost their lives in the peace mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were deeply saddened by the recent tragic accident which took the lives of 12 brave peace promoters, among them the Deputy to the High Representative, Ambassador Gerd Wagner.

We cannot forget the tens of thousands people who were killed or wounded, the thousands of missing and hundreds of thousands displaced persons and refugees. Heavy damage was inflicted on the economic, social, cultural and other sectors of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But ultimately it was the social tissue of Bosnia and Herzegovina that suffered the greatest damage. The striving for national domination, exclusivity and xenophobia, and also autism, have destroyed bridges of communication and have deepened the gap between various ethnic groups.

Given that the tragic consequences of the conflict remain, it will require a lot of wisdom, patience and hard work to overcome the many obstacles in our way. But we believe that it is time to turn resolutely towards the future. We must use this precious time to rebuild confidence and establish relations between different ethnic groups and among all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These relations should be based on internationally accepted standards and norms of behaviour. In that context the promotion and protection of human rights is one of the core issues. Human rights are universally accepted and inherent to all human beings, and they must be respected.

Two years after the signatures on the Dayton Agreement stopped the negative current of events and marked the beginning of the peace process, Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing enormous tasks: rebuilding the war-torn country and simultaneously establishing a democratic system of governance and administration. In spite of a variety of problems and shortcomings, we feel that the positive energy necessary for such an endeavour is accumulating. Besides the continuous attention and support of the international community, we need the parties concerned in Bosnia and Herzegovina to show additional political goodwill if they want to see the peace process progress and lead, ultimately, to results.

The legal framework for this exceptionally complex goal was established in the Dayton Agreement. The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina was drafted, taking into account the political reality and using as the point of departure the only possible formula: three peoples, two entities, one state. To make this rather unique arrangement viable, in accordance with the provisions of the Dayton Agreement, institutions at the state level have been established.

The Presidency, Council of Ministers and Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina are functioning but they have not yet reached the necessary optimal rhythm and performance. This represents a serious obstacle and must be overcome without any delay because of its direct influence on the functioning of the entire State system, and on the external relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as on the key development programmes.

At the lower level, the system of cantonal power and administration is taking shape. It encompasses a number of important duties and activities but also responsibilities, since through it equal representation and participation of different ethnic groups in power-sharing should be secured. This represents one of the pillars of the multi-ethnic, democratic State of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

But what is most important is full and unconditional compliance with all the provisions of the Dayton Agreement. That must be understood by all those who put their signatures on the peace agreements, and those who do not honour their obligations must face the consequences. I would also like to say that the successful organization of the municipal elections in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, held just a week ago, is of great significance. Imperfect as they may be, these elections represent a milestone on our complex and often difficult journey towards stable peace and in the building of the modern, democratic State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The fact that the elections took place throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with hardly any problems or any major incidents, demonstrates the readiness of all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to comply with the provisions of the Dayton Agreement.

The very fact that the majority of the population in this war-torn and exhausted country responded in an orderly fashion and presented themselves in large numbers at the voting stations speaks for itself. It is a clear signal that they want to take the destiny of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their own hands. It is also a testimony to their readiness to pursue the noble goal of healing the war wounds and starting to rebuild the bridges of cooperation, tolerance and mutual respect.

The post-war experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina underlines the importance of democratic reforms, the introduction of rule of law and the administration of justice in accordance with the highest standards, respect for human rights and the strengthening of public institutions. For a truly democratic society, it is of particular importance to open the space for free activities of civil society, citizens associations, various non-governmental organizations and religious communities. During the elections process, the significance of open, objective and truthful information delivered by free media was confirmed once again.

In order to achieve all of this, the presence of the international community is of critical importance. Help and support from the various organizations and agencies within the United Nations system is invaluable to Bosnia and Herzegovina and we are grateful for it.

Socio-economic development and the building of a democratic State are closely interrelated. Only with properly targeted help from the outside will Bosnia and Herzegovina be able to create a sustainable economic system and thus achieve a stable environment that is less exposed to crisis and conflict situations. Here we are talking about a close and mutually conditioned relationship between development, democracy and peace. The realization of this paradigm holds the key to the door for Bosnia and Herzegovina to catch up with the fast developing world.

Therefore, I am convinced that we all share the opinion that this should continue in order to implement a common long-term vision for a prosperous and stable Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have to move down this road swiftly and urgently. And this applies beyond the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina; we cannot afford to delay stability in the region. In that context, I would like to underline one growing phenomenon of our time which is particularly relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina: the interaction between the foreign and internal factors in the countries in transition. Only the combined efforts of the two can yield the desired results; yet the international factor must never forget that the case of each country is specific. Instead of a schematic and stereotypical approach, a new, inventive and flexible methodology and pattern of activities should apply. This would certainly contribute to a better focus for programmes and a higher degree of coordination. It would also prevent overlapping and inadequate spending of resources.

The purpose of my brief overview was to share with this body the recent experience in consolidating peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am convinced that by the end of this debate we will be enriched with valuable ideas and proposals on how to continue and improve the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the Secretary-General stated in his address, the international community must ensure that its collective investments — military, political and financial — have not been made in vain. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina share this approach entirely.

As a Member State, Bosnia and Herzegovina is closely following the ongoing process of reform of our Organization. The fifty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the main features of the global political scene are rapidly changing. The new political and strategic structures are taking shape, with far-reaching consequences. With the cold war behind us, new prospects, with new fears and new challenges, are looming over the world. In such an environment, we attach the greatest importance to the place and the role of the United Nations.

We would like to commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his collaborators for the immense efforts in preparing a comprehensive report that contains a programme of action for the reform of the United Nations system. We cannot but agree that it is high time for the United Nations to respond properly to the changing world and thus confirm the irreplaceable role of this universal Organization.

We go along with those who insist on a modern, streamlined efficient Organization, ready to respond to the demands of the new times. The United Nations must reach out to the world with new vigour and offer all of its assets in order to prevent threats to international peace and security and also to address the ever-growing number of universal problems. By breaking bureaucratic sediments, the United Nations must became a source of great intellectual power capable of offering a visionary perspective on the future.

We would like to state that one of the pressing tasks is the reform of the Security Council. However, we must be prudent in dealing with this question. A balance between more democratic representation in, and full mobility of action for, this important United Nations body has to be found.

Before concluding, I would like to touch upon the two questions which are of particular relevance for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The first question relates to that abhorrent and immoral weapon — anti-personnel landmines. Bosnia and Herzegovina is unfortunately one of the largest fields infested with this dangerous killing device. We strongly support the conclusions of the Oslo Conference and hope to see the international community united in supporting a comprehensive ban.

The second question has to do with our first-hand experience with the most horrible violation of human rights that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are therefore strongly raising our voice in favour of the perpetrators of genocide and war crimes being brought before justice and prosecuted. We welcome the idea of the establishment of an International Criminal Court, and we are convinced that the experience with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda will be taken into account during the preparation process.

In conclusion, I would like to underline our feeling that the exchange of views and experiences during the fifty-second session is of great importance. It will certainly bring new inspiration and, I hope, vision for the overall development of our planet. It will also contribute to our preparations for the encounter with the third millennia, its challenges but also its new chances and possibilities. We must be ready for this historic opportunity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Iriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Kategaya (Uganda): Permit me, on behalf of the Uganda delegation, to express our pleasure at seeing Mr. Udovenko preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Allow me also to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the outstanding manner in which he discharged his onerous tasks while presiding over the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I also salute and congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the commitment and dedication he has demonstrated since he assumed this office.

We note the initiative announced by the Secretary-General on 16 July 1997, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". We will participate actively in the deliberations on these bold and far-reaching proposals. The discussions we shall have on the issues contained in the Secretary-General's proposal will determine the kind of United Nations that can best serve us in the twenty-first century.

The issue of the reform of the United Nations is not new. Reform of this Organization has always been a continuous process in which we all have an interest. We all want to see the United Nations revitalized, strengthened and well managed. The United Nations is unique. The reform of the Organization must be approached from the viewpoint of its purposes.

In reforming the United Nations, due consideration must be given to its unequal and diverse membership, encompassing different cultures and value systems as well as great economic and social inequalities, which lead to differences of opinion on the different aspects of the work of the Organization and how they might be strengthened.

Indeed, most views expressed in the past on reform have come against the background of widespread scepticism. These views see the United Nations as excessively costly, mismanaged, inefficient, bureaucratic, corrupt and overstaffed with low- quality staff. The United Nations, therefore, finds itself at a critical crossroads: neglected in some critical aspects and deliberately eroded in others. Contradictory assessments of its performance and usefulness and divergent views

concerning its future role have given rise to political controversy.

The important issues of reform must therefore not be viewed merely as a question of cutting costs; rather, reform should aim at the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations in the delivery of programmes and services, particularly those addressing the pressing needs of developing countries. In elaborating and implementing the reform package, it is necessary that the programmes that benefit the least developed countries and Africa emerge stronger and better equipped to discharge their onerous responsibilities.

The Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has already eloquently espoused the African position on the reform of the Security Council. We support this and the Non-Aligned Movement positions. The Security Council should be expanded in both categories on the principle of equitable geographical representation. Africa has already proposed that it be granted two permanent seats with full veto powers. At the same time, the exercise of the power must conform to democratic principles.

If the United Nations is to be reformed and made effective, then adequate financing is a matter of top priority. We therefore appeal to all Member States to pay their dues in full, on time and without conditions. Without this commitment, reforms will only be a smoke screen to hide our reluctance to implement the commitments we collectively agreed upon at the celebration to mark the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization two years ago.

Related to this is the question of the scale of assessments. Uganda supports the principle of capacity to pay as the fundamental criterion for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations. This is critical in order to redress the unfair burden that developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular continue to shoulder as a result of imperfections inherent in the present scale methodology, which are to their disadvantage. This principle has been consistently reaffirmed by the General Assembly in various resolutions. In this connection, we would like to caution that attempts to impose self-interested positions will not yield any satisfactory outcome.

Uganda welcomes the result of the recently concluded agreement in the area of anti-personnel landmines in Oslo. We are particularly satisfied with the progress thus far made on these weapons. On our part, even before the conclusion of the Oslo agreement on these weapons, which cause untold and indiscriminate destruction, we in Uganda had already stopped and dismantled our facilities for their manufacture. We no longer manufacture, import or use these weapons. We call on all peace-loving nations, those that care for the innocent who lose their limbs every minute to landmines, to follow our example. It is our sincere hope that when the agreement on anti-personnel landmines will be opened in Ottawa, Canada, for signature, even those Member States that were reluctant to join in the consensus on the agreement will sign it. We hope that the Oslo process will lead to progress in disarmament negotiations, leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and subsequently of all weapons of mass destruction.

The political and economic situation in African remains a matter of grave concern to us. We believe that Africa must continue to search for and to find the most suitable political arrangements that will guarantee peace and stability. African society, since time immemorial, has always emphasized harmony and decision-making by consensus rather than competition and confrontation. Our societies emphasized the good of the whole rather than the untamed pursuit of selfish interests. In short, egalitarianism and equal participation were the hallmarks of societal and political organization. However, as we all know, Africa was exposed to other cultures and systems that introduced new forms of governance and politics. It is not surprising, therefore, that, upon independence, these powerful and pervasive influences, like multiparty politics and fierce competition, tore our societies apart. The conflicts that proliferated in the wake of independence must be understood against this background.

We can state boldly today that, this notwithstanding, conflict and chaos in Africa is on the retreat. We have witnessed the end of conflict in Liberia and elections have taken place. Military dictators are now roundly condemned and isolated. The actions that are being undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) against the military junta in Sierra Leone — actions that we all support — speak loud.

In our own region, the Great Lakes region, we witnessed the rout of the Mobutu dictatorship, a heinous regime that plundered one of the richest countries in Africa almost into oblivion. We refused to accept the military coup of Pierre Buyoya in Burundi and have set out tough sanctions and conditions for the restoration of

democratic governance. This position was recently renewed in Dar-es-Salaam.

The efforts that we are undertaking, deserve support, be they in the context of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Management or of regional initiatives such as those involving the Great Lakes, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or those of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development on the Sudan conflict. At the same time, countries that have emerged from conflicts need to be given a modicum of moral and material support to allow them get back on their feet. We are all agreed on the need for post-conflict peace-building and the need to establish a continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development. We are also agreed that democracy, good governance and accountability represent the best form of leadership.

However, nations that are struggling to reconstruct cannot wait for a full restoration of democratic order before they address urgent humanitarian and relief requirements. Quite often the very transition to the rule of law and to democratic governance is contingent upon significant progress on the humanitarian and economic fronts. It is with these kind of considerations that we would like to see tangible assistance extended to the Democratic Republic of the Congo without delay or preconditions. We must put behind us the chaos that afflicted that country and the sad chapter in the history of the Congo that was brought about by Mobutu's mismanagement. The survival of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is paramount and should be of concern to all of us.

The experience of the United Nations in Somalia and Rwanda has demonstrated the need for improvement in the Organization's ability to anticipate crisis situations and put in place effective mechanisms to avert such situations, including in the area of early warning. In this connection, we note with satisfaction the strengthening of the United Nations capacity for post-conflict peace-building with the designation of the Department of Political Affairs as focal point for this purpose.

We are seized of the grave situation in Congo (Brazzaville) and the Central African Republic. The unsteady progress on a negotiated settlement of the conflicts in Angola, Somalia, southern Sudan and the Western Sahara continue be of concern to us. We call on all the parties to the conflicts to engage in constructive dialogue in order to establish lasting peace. We should all support them in this process.

In Uganda, we continue to search for solutions to our economic difficulties. We have therefore continued to implement far-reaching economic reforms that emphasize liberalization, privatization, investment promotion and cost-effectiveness in management. The results are promising, and we have recorded gross domestic product growth rates of more than 6 per cent per annum. Now we are grappling with the need to ensure that economic progress benefits the people, particularly the poorest. This we will address in the framework of a poverty eradication strategy, the pillars of which will include: first, the improvement of physical infrastructure, such as roads and telecommunications; secondly, the universalizing of primary education and the increasing encouragement of private education at the secondary and tertiary levels to unlock the creative power of our population; thirdly, the modernization and diversification of agriculture; and fourthly, the promotion of micro- and small-scale enterprise through improved access to credit for the rural poor.

This is a tall order, and we call upon our development partners to support us in this process in the context of the already formulated national action plans and the agreed framework for international development cooperation.

The issue of the world's freshwater resources remains of the utmost concern to my delegation. Water shortages in the next century are likely to restrain economic and social development. A large part of Uganda is covered by fresh water. In Uganda, we attach importance to the economic value of water, and that is why we recognize the importance of its equitable and reasonable use. Unfortunately, our water resources are being choked by the rapid growth and spread of the water hyacinth on Lake Victoria and on other lakes and rivers in the Nile Valley. As we have done in the past, we urgently appeal once again to the international community to extend its support to enable us to address the problem of the water hyacinth.

Let me reiterate our confidence in the mission of the United Nations in coordinating and delivering targeted assistance to developing countries in all areas of human endeavour, in partnership with Governments. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the focus of the Organization is sharpened to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of its programmes, be it in the area of governance, poverty eradication, capacity-building or humanitarian assistance.

We need a United Nations that will act as an agent of progress and change and that will be equipped to play an effective and leading role in improving the economic and social conditions of all the world's nations — not just a few. We also want a reformed United Nations that will deal effectively with the growing number of complex international challenges, including development, peace and security. Furthermore, we need a reformed United Nations that must provide global leadership and vision in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): I should like to say a few words in response to the remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Spain this morning about Gibraltar.

The long-standing position of the British Government on this matter is well known to the Government of Spain. I will simply restate it briefly here. The British Government believes that issues relating to Gibraltar can be resolved only by direct talks such as those established under the 1984 Brussels Declaration. In that regard, we attach importance to continuing the dialogue with Spain as a means to overcoming our differences.

However, we do not accept Spain's interpretation of the idea of territorial integrity as described by the Foreign Minister this morning. British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is incontrovertible. Moreover, the British Government stands by the commitment to the people of Gibraltar as contained in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution of Gibraltar, which states that the United Kingdom will not enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

Spain's offer to reintegrate Gibraltar into Spain could therefore only be the basis for a settlement if it had the freely and democratically expressed support of the people of Gibraltar.

Mr. Kasoulides (Cyprus): In my reply to the speech of His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Turkey, I should like to state the following.

First, my Turkish colleague spoke about the realities — as he put it — in Cyprus which are not recognized by the international community and suggested that this is perhaps the reason for the failure to achieve peace for so many years. He mentioned as realities the existence of two distant people, two separate administrations and two democracies. One cannot accept as realities *faits accomplis* created by the use of force and maintained by military strength in blatant disregard of international law and United Nations resolutions. Ignoring United Nations resolutions can hardly be considered as a reality by the international community.

Secondly, regarding the application of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus for membership of the European Union, and regarding whether Cyprus can or cannot join the European Union for legal or political reasons, I wish to refer to the statement made at the seventh plenary meeting by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union regarding the interpretation of the 1960 treaties and the fact that these treaties cannot prevent Cyprus from joining the European Union.

Still on this point, let me recall the statement made by the President of the Security Council for the month of August 1997, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir John Weston, who expressed the concern and disappointment of the Council because the Turkish Cypriot side had tried to impede progress in the negotiating efforts by introducing the issue of the European Union application as a precondition for the talks.

Finally, regarding the deployment of S-300 missiles in Cyprus one year from now, I want to state categorically that these weapons are purely defensive surface-to-air missiles destined to defend the small island of Cyprus from a potential air attack, since Cyprus has no air force of its own. It is ludicrous to believe that Cyprus, with a population of half a million, can in any way be a threat to the security of Turkey, a nation of 65 million people, or be a threat to the Turkish Cypriots — who obviously do not fly in the air.

However, if there is substantial political progress in the effort to reach a political solution to the longstanding

Cyprus problem, or if there is an agreement on a programme of demilitarization of the island, as suggested by President Clerides, and if the reasons that made us feel vulnerable facing 35,000 Turkish troops within the island of Cyprus and made us feel the necessity of ordering those missiles thus no longer exist, then there will be no objective in deploying missiles or any other weapons in Cyprus.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.